

INTRODUCING THE KIA K5

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The 2021 Kia K5 GT has superior cornering performance, faster acceleration, and better overall handling performance than the 2020 BMW 330i. With a 2.5L Turbo engine, 8-speed Dual-Clutch Transmission, and sport-tuned suspension for precision handling, sedan may be too slow of a word.

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2021 K5 GT shown with optional features. Not all optional features are available on all trims. AMCI Testing Certified; cornering/handling on dry and wet pavement; ESC off; BMW 330i Sedan with RWD.

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ON THE COVER
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The Mercedes-Benz E-Class
delivers what
owners expect
(and more).
Photograph by
Brandon Lim.



MOTORTREND CAR OF THE YEAR®

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Mark Rechtin



EST. 1949
VOL. 73 NO. 1

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**Farewell, John.
We will miss you.**

Photograph by John Lamm.



Porsche recommends seat belt usage and observance of traffic laws at all times.



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NASCAR 2020 PRESSURE



2020 NASCAR SEASON UNFOLD
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What exactly defines a car these days?



Quick, look at the picture. Which of these Volvos is a car, and which is the truck?

The Volvo on the left is the V60 Polestar Engineered, a fizzing family hauler with 415 hp and 494 lb-ft coursing through its 2.0-liter superturbo-four engine and motors. It has a ground clearance of 5.4 inches and gets 28/33 mpg city/highway fuel economy (70/68 mpg-e on gas+electricity). The Volvo on the right is a (discontinued) XC70 AWD, a refined trundler generating 235 hp and 236 lb-ft through a 3.2-liter inline-six engine. It has 8.3 inches of ground clearance and fuel economy of 18/25 mpg city/highway.

On initial inspection, they're both wagons based on passenger-car platforms. And they sure look like the same type of vehicle, right? Wrong. The V60 Polestar is a station wagon, which means it is classified as a car, while the XC70 is perceived as an SUV, which means (technically) it's a truck. At least according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

I don't mean to pick on Volvo. All automakers do this. They can use the flexible parameters the government provides for categorizing vehicles to help them better fit within regulations. If classified as a wagon (and thus a car) or as an SUV (and thus a truck), different regulations for fuel economy, emissions, and crash testing apply.

But instead of looking at the underlying platform and structure (a car-based unibody or truck-based body-on-frame), the EPA merely groups automobiles by interior volume, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration groups cars for crash testing by weight class.

If it sounds confusing, it is. And sometimes the definitions work against both automakers and consumers.

We have lifted hatchbacks that have barely more ground clearance than a Toyota Corolla sedan and are only offered in front-wheel-drive form—yet automakers insist they be marketed as SUVs. Yes, we're looking at you, Nissan Kicks, Hyundai Venue, and Toyota CH-R. But dig deep into the EPA's fueleconomy.gov website, and you will find they are (correctly) classified as cars.

But then we have a direct competitor to those vehicles

Sometimes definitions work against both automakers and consumers.

in the Kia Seltos, which in addition to its off-roadish looks has optional all-wheel drive and a ground clearance of 7.3 inches (though a bit shy of the 7.8 considered the cutoff point for calling something an SUV). It even has an AWD mode switch for slippery conditions. That should get you to your ski lodge. Is it an SUV? Yes, according to the EPA. But it's also based on the same platform as the front-drive Kia Soul hatchback, which is a car; that platform also underpins the Hyundai Venue. Hmm.

Even weirder, in the old days, vehicles could be categorized as both a car *and* a truck. For instance, the EPA decided that under its parameters the PT Cruiser and the original Lexus RX 300 were cars, but manufacturers could categorize them as trucks for NHTSA crash-test and Corporate Average Fuel Economy purposes. Talk about wiggle room.

This year, we even have a carmaker that symbolically shot itself in the foot by playing with definitions. Mercedes-Benz insists on categorizing its E 450 All-Terrain as an SUV rather than as a wagon (which would thus fit into the "car" category). As a result, the MotorTrend 2021 Car of the Year victory by the E-Class lineup does not include the All-Terrain, simply because Mercedes lifted the chassis a few inches, slapped on some macho cladding, and slightly improved its off-road capabilities over a standard 4Matic wagon. Too bad. Our Golden Calipers would look rad on its roof.

On the flip side, when we contact automakers to submit vehicles for SUV of the Year, we caution them against sending front-drive tall hatchbacks or wagons—because they'll inevitably get stuck in the silt pit of the Honda Proving Center and thus essentially will be disqualified. But they do it anyway, with predictable results. Continue the confusion.

Although we most definitely have more pressing regulatory matters confronting the EPA and NHTSA, perhaps the automakers and these governmental bodies can come to a consensus as to what these vehicles actually are. They're cars, right? ■

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Trend 1.21



NASCAR 2020: UNDER PRESSURE BRINGS THE INTENSITY



WORDS MIKE FLOYD PHOTOGRAPHS GETTY IMAGES

DOCUSERIES OFFERS AN EXCLUSIVE, IN-DEPTH LOOK AT AN EXTRAORDINARY SEASON

It all started with a dramatic Daytona 500 that was delayed a day by rain for the second time ever and then went to a thrilling overtime, with Denny Hamlin roaring to the checkered flag by a scant 0.014 of a second. Then came the pandemic, which upended NASCAR and the world as we know it. And a reckoning on race would further challenge the sport.

To say that the 2020 NASCAR Cup Series season has been unprecedented would be the height of understatement, much like 2020 itself. It's a season that demanded an in-depth telling of how it unfolded, and *NASCAR 2020: Under Pressure* does just that, documenting a year on the track unlike any in NASCAR history.

Now available for streaming on the

MotorTrend app, *NASCAR 2020: Under Pressure* brings fans over the pit wall and into the thick of the action like few NASCAR programs have before. From the pandemic and NASCAR's reaction to it with the opening episode "Hit the Brakes" to the Bubba Wallace-led conversation on racial equality in the second episode "We Stand United," the





The docuseries takes a *Hard Knocks*-style approach to following the tumultuous 2020 NASCAR season and the biggest drivers in the Cup Series, including Bubba Wallace, below.



seven-part docuseries examines the seismic events that have unfolded during the 2020 season, culminating with the series championship at Phoenix Raceway.

The Wallace situation in particular was a tumultuous period where the only Black driver in the Cup Series publicly called out NASCAR to do more to take a position against racism after the killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis in May 2020. The series subsequently banned the Confederate flag at its events and fully backed Wallace's stance for racial justice, as did the drivers who lined up in solidarity behind him.

While in the midst of confronting social justice issues head on, NASCAR was also making headlines as one of the first sports in the world to lurch back into action in the middle of the COVID-19 outbreak—largely avoiding the subsequent issues that have plagued other sports that have resumed since. The smooth restart to the season allowed *NASCAR 2020: Under Pressure* to unfold, taking viewers on a *Hard Knocks*-style journey following some of the sport's top drivers as they navigate trying circumstances in their drive to take home the Cup Series title.

Beyond the obvious, the trackside storylines in the 2020 NASCAR season have been plenty, some of which are touched on in *Under Pressure*: Ryan Newman returning to Daytona after his harrowing crash at the Daytona 500 that has altered his outlook on life and racing;

seven-time champ Jimmie Johnson missing the NASCAR Playoffs in what should have been a triumphant final season sadly disrupted by the pandemic; young Matt DiBenedetto, facing adversity and an uncertain future despite his first career playoff appearance.

The special sauce in *Under Pressure* is the extensive behind-the-scenes access to the drivers and the series itself. You'll be changing tires, looking on from the Race Control booth, and peering inside the cars as drivers and teams navigate the new normal—all as the pressure mounts and the chase whittles down to the final Championship Four duel.

Produced for the MotorTrend Group by NASCAR Productions, *NASCAR 2020: Under Pressure* has something for everyone, from huge NASCAR fans who will appreciate the behind-the-scenes access to documentary buffs who should find the mix of action and the stress of navigating the unparalleled nature of this season highly entertaining stuff. You can stream the new docuseries and start a free trial of the MotorTrend app by signing up at MotorTrend.com/nascar2020.

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Intake

2021 Acura MDX Prototype

Injecting some sport into the sport utility vehicle

FIRST LOOK



Tom Nguyen, Acura's global development leader for the 2022 Acura MDX, has been waiting four years for this day. In 2016, he and a team of 19 engineers, product planners, and designers met at Acura's Design Studio in Hawthorne, California, hopped into seven three-row SUVs built by competitors, and set off for a cabin in Mammoth. Over the next week they shared ideas, bickered over what they liked and disliked about those luxury three-rows, and burned the midnight oil to decide what direction they were going to take Acura's next-generation MDX.

"In Honda culture we have this concept called *Waigaya*," Nguyen tells us. "People from diverse areas come together and speak as equals, and that's how we hashed out what we want from the MDX."

Even though what you see here is a prototype, the three-row SUV you'll be able to buy will likely look nearly identical to this, inside and out, the only major differences being the 21-inch wheels on the prototype will probably be changed

from complex three-tone pieces to two-tone units, and the matte paint job likely won't make production. Acura said its focus was to elevate the new MDX in terms of both luxury and sportiness, and the result is a car that's longer, lower, and wider than the car it replaces and steeped in a more athletic mindset.

Underneath the sleek new sheetmetal rests an all-new platform, and for the first time in an MDX, there's a double A-arm suspension setup in the front and a multilink in the rear. That's partly to help the standard MDX double down on performance and partly to prepare the chassis for the forthcoming, sportier MDX Type S model, which will make its debut sometime in the summer of 2021.

As you might expect from an Acura, the MDX prototype features the brand's Super Handling All-Wheel Drive system, which includes side-to-side torque vectoring on the rear axle. The system is now in its fourth generation and should continue to add some agility to the Acura SUV by helping it claw out of corners and tackle low-traction surfaces. Less expected is the MDX prototype's inclusion of Brembo four-piston brakes—sure, they're hot stuff for a family hauler, but we actually expect something similar to this system to appear on the spicier MDX Type S.

Power for the MDX prototype comes from Acura's familiar 3.5-liter V-6, which is connected to a 10-speed automatic. The eventual MDX Type S will feature the same 3.0-liter turbocharged V-6 that's been announced for the TLX Type S, where it'll make 355 hp and 354 lb-ft.



If the outside of Acura's MDX study is all about performance, the inside is about luxury first. There is high-grade Milano leather on all major surfaces, and the seats have deviating stitching, gradient perforation, and contrasting piping throughout. Surfaces not coated in leather will feature open-pore wood or polished aluminum.

Acura has stuffed plenty of displays into this leather- and wood-lined space. Two 12.3-inch screens dominate the front of the cabin. The one in front of the driver will unveil Acura's Precision Cockpit, a fully customizable digital instrument cluster that replaces traditional gauges and dials. The one above the center console will host a slightly changed version of the infotainment system that's in the current RDX, trackpad controller and all.

The seats are adjustable up to 16 ways, the cabin can come with LED lighting with 27 schemes, and a 25-speaker, 1,000-watt ELS 3D audio system will be available on the next MDX. Acura will also offer an ultra-wide panoramic moonroof and a suite of safety features, all of which we assume will describe the production 2022 Acura MDX when it arrives. **Nick Yekikian**





2021 Hyundai Santa Fe

New platform, design, and three new engines



FIRST LOOK



The 2021 Hyundai Santa Fe has received an—ahem—refresh. We almost spit out our coffee at the description. The word “refresh” in automotive parlance gets a lot of exercise. We’ve seen it used when a model gets a new fascia and a new color. We have also seen automakers refer to a vehicle as “next-generation” when it continues to ride on the same platform with an engine tweaked to coax out a bit more power—on top of the new fascia and new color.

Imagine my surprise, then, when Hyundai execs outlined the serious changes to the Santa Fe. For starters, it switches to a new platform, one shared with the 2021 Kia Sorento, and Kia isn’t shy about calling that the new fourth generation of the vehicle. The degree of modification drove the move to a new platform, we are told, but the number of parts changed was just shy of calling it a full model change.

The 2021 Santa Fe has three new engines to choose from. The base engine is a 191-hp, 182-lb-ft 2.5-liter four-cylinder gas engine with the carryover eight-speed automatic. For more, step up to the 2.5-liter turbocharged four-cylinder, which generates 277 hp and 311 lb-ft and is mated to a new wet dual-clutch eight-speed automatic. And the family welcomes a hybrid that pairs an electric motor with a 175-hp, 195-lb-ft 1.6-liter turbocharged four-cylinder engine for a total output of 225 hp. It is mated to a next-gen six-speed automatic unique to the hybrid. A plug-in hybrid will follow in late 2021, likely for the 2022 model year.

Inside, the Santa Fe adopts some of the classy materials and styling elements of the larger Hyundai Palisade three-row SUV. The new Santa Fe is a bit longer, slightly wider, and lower than before, but its wheelbase is unchanged.

There are four trim levels: SE, SEL, Limited, and Calligraphy, which is the new top trim level. With quilted Nappa leather and other high-end materials and amenities, Hyundai uses the Calligraphy to help differentiate the Santa Fe from the Kia Sorento.

The hybrid comes in SEL or Limited trim only. The 2.5-liter turbo is introduced at the Limited level. All-wheel drive is available on all trims and is standard on the hybrids and Calligraphy, which also has a Class III tow hitch with a seven-pin connector. On the hybrids, the motor is in the front; there is a mechanical AWD system for power to the rear wheels.

Inside, the center stack now flows like the one in the Palisade. The base models have a new 8.0-inch center screen with standard wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. The larger 10.3-inch center display adds navigation, but Apple CarPlay and Android Auto are not wireless yet; that capability is still under development. Wireless charging, however, is standard now. The driver has a 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster available in all but the base trim. The new shift-by-wire transmission mode selector frees up room in the center console.

Engineers say the new platform provides more rigidity for a smoother ride and should be quieter with thicker

matting as well as new fillers and structural materials. The windshield and acoustic glass are also thicker.

The Hyundai Smart Sense system provides a variety of standard safety drive assist features, such as forward collision avoidance assist that can now detect cyclists as well as pedestrians, blind-spot collision avoidance, rear cross-traffic collision avoidance, lane keeping and lane following assist, driver attention warning, and alerts to ensure people exit safely. The Santa Fe has adaptive cruise control, and instrument cluster camera views make it easier to see objects in the blind spot (when a turn signal is active).

Other new goodies include ambient lighting and the same Smart Park system in the 2021 Hyundai Sonata, which allows the driver to get out of the vehicle and remotely park it. The hands-free power liftgate opens automatically.

Whatever you call it, the heavily face-lifted 2021 Hyundai Santa Fe, made in Alabama, goes on sale in mid-December. The hybrid, which will come from the Ulsan plant in South Korea, follows in mid-February 2021. **Alisa Priddle**



Intake

2021 Volvo XC40 Recharge

Look out, Tesla Model Y, you have company



Pop quiz: How many 400-plus-hp production cars has Volvo built?

The 402-hp 2021 Volvo XC40 Recharge Pure Electric P8 is one of the most significant cars the Swedish brand has launched, not for its power but because it's Volvo's first electric car.

The headlines: The XC40 Recharge P8 is powered by a pair of 201-hp electric motors, one mounted at the front axle, the other at the rear, for a total system output of 402 horsepower and 486 lb-ft of torque—and, of course, all-wheel drive. The motors are fed by a 78-kWh lithium-ion battery pack that will deliver an EPA-rated range of about 208 miles and can be recharged to 80 percent capacity in 40 minutes using a 150-kW DC fast charger. With federal tax credits included, the XC40 Recharge P8 will have a base price of less than \$50,000 when it goes on sale in early 2021.

Volvo claims the all-electric XC40 will zip from 0 to 60 in just 4.7 seconds, 1.6 seconds less than it takes the 248-hp, conventionally powered AWD R-Design T5 model. And it feels every bit as quick as



The Volvo XC40 Recharge's skateboard platform (left) includes a 78-kWh battery pack that the EPA says will be good for 208 miles of range.

FIRSTDIVE



that on the road, whooshing past slower traffic in one effortless, silent surge of acceleration and leaping out of tight corners on a tidal wave of torque and AWD traction.

With its taut ride, the XC40 Recharge P8 feels a bit like a hot hatch on stilts, particularly on the 235/45 Pirelli P Zero Elect tires wrapped around the optional 20-inch wheels fitted to our test car. But only to a point: There's not a lot of feel in the steering, which is best in the firmer of the two selectable modes to counter the tendency of the tires to follow contours in the road surface. The brake pedal gets a little wooden after a stint of enthusiastic driving.

The Recharge P8 driveline has only two modes: Normal, in which the car coasts when you lift off, and One Pedal, which does exactly as it says, using regen to slow the car dramatically the instant you release pressure on the accelerator pedal. One Pedal mode is sometimes useful around town, but Normal mode gives the electric XC40 a nicer, more free-flowing demeanor that makes it less tiring to drive (you don't have to constantly keep pressure on the accelerator just to keep the car moving) and more efficient (converting kinetic energy into energy stored in the battery invariably means some energy is lost). In Normal mode, all braking up to 0.3 g is done via regen anyway, and although a little more initial bite would be nice, the blending between regen and mechanical braking is smoothly done.

You'll search long and hard for a

start-stop button beforehand. There isn't one; once the Recharge P8 is unlocked, you simply sit in the seat, buckle up, tug at the stubby shifter, and drive off. There's a sensor in the driver's seat squab that gets the car ready to go.

Despite the battery pack under the floor, the cabin feels as roomy as that of the regular XC40, and Volvo claims the rear load space area is identical. There's also a small frunk, roomy enough for a soft bag and some charging cables under the hood. Standard equipment levels are high and include a 12.3-inch digital instrument panel with configurable EV-specific displays, a panoramic sunroof, heated front power seats, and inductive charging for your smartphone. Also standard is the full suite of Volvo safety features, including lane keep assist, blind-spot and cross-traffic alert, and rear collision alert.

The XC40 Recharge P8 also has Volvo's new Android-powered infotainment system, which comes with Google Maps, Google Assistant, and Google Play apps, among others, all controlled via the 9.0-inch central touchscreen. The system can handle over-the-air updates, allowing upgrades for everything from apps to vehicle software to be downloaded while the car is parked. **Angus MacKenzie**



SPECS PRICE \$54,985 LAYOUT Front-/rear-motor, AWD, 5-pass, 4-door SUV MOTORS/TRANSMISSION front/rear permanent-magnet electric motors, 402 hp, 486 lb-ft (comb)/1-speed automatic CURB WEIGHT 4,850 lb (est) L x W x H 174.2 x 73.3 x 65.0 in 0-60 MPH 4.7 (mfr est) EPA FUEL ECON, CITY/HWY/ COMB 85/72/79 mpg-e ENERGY CONSUMPTION, CITY/HWY 40/47 kWh/100 miles CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB 0.25 lb/mi ON SALE Early 2021



TREND | 1.21

MIKE CONNOR

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So long, 9,000 rpm. The 992-series Porsche 911 GT3, set to make its debut this year, might be the last with a naturally aspirated engine. Sources inside Porsche's Weissach R&D center say it is virtually impossible that a naturally aspirated engine will be able to meet the next generation of emissions and fuel consumption regulations. "It's as if they want us to build nothing but turbocharged engines," one engineer grumbles. If that happens, the 992 GT3s are certain to become instant classics. Details are scarce, but you can bank on the choice of either a PDK twin-clutch auto or conventional six-speed manual transmission being offered. A wingless Touring version will be included in the lineup, as well. **All change for the next-generation Range Rover.** Code-named L460, JLR's flagship SUV is reportedly moving onto the MLA vehicle architecture for the 2022 model year. MLA is said to be lighter, stiffer, and less complex than the all-aluminum D7u hardware that underpins the current model and will be built in standard and long-wheelbase forms for L460. Things will be different under the hood, too. The mainstream engine for the U.S. market will be a 4.4-liter V-8, built by BMW and tuned to produce about 520 hp. Entry-level models in the U.S. will continue with the 355-hp version of JLR's 3.0-liter inline-six used in the current car. JLR is also likely to add a more powerful PHEV powertrain to the U.S. lineup, combining a 394-hp version of the 3.0-liter six with a 140-hp motor to give a powertrain boasting more than 530 hp and 500 lb-ft of torque. The new Range is expected to make its public debut late in 2021. **Now that the 2021 Mercedes-Benz S-Class has been launched,** Daimler is turning its attention to its electric flagship, the EQS. Built on Daimler's bespoke EVA2 EV platform, the EQS will feature a motor at each axle with a large battery pack in between. The skateboard layout means the EQS will be about the same size as a standard-wheelbase S-Class but will have the interior room of the long-wheelbase model, according to sources in Stuttgart. The EQS will look very different from the traditional flagship Mercedes, too; those who have seen the car say the production version retains the cab-forward proportion and arching roofline of the Vision EQS unveiled at the 2019 Frankfurt show.



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Intake

2022 Volkswagen Taos

VW slides a small SUV under the Tiguan



VW engineers continue their journey into space—as in lots of it, for rear-seat passengers and for the cargo they bring.

FIRST LOOK



The new Taos is Volkswagen's smallest SUV, slotting beneath the all-electric ID4 and the recently refreshed Tiguan.

Like most VW products these days, the Taos is built on the Modular Transverse Architecture (MQB) platform. Its wheelbase of 105.9 inches is one of the longest in the segment, and the extra length helps with rear legroom (as we discovered during our first drive of a prototype version of the Taos). At 175.8 inches long, the Taos is among the largest SUVs in its class, falling an inch short of the Subaru Crosstrek but surpassing the 173-inch-long Mazda CX-30.

Inside, the Taos sports 28.1 cubic feet of space with the rear bench seat upright; fold down that second row, and you'll find there is a generous 66.3 cubic feet of free space to play with. That's more than both the aforementioned CX-30 and Crosstrek with the seats either up or down.

When it comes to market in the middle of next year, the Taos will be available with

either front- or all-wheel drive—just like most of its competitors. The only available engine is a new 1.5-liter turbocharged four-cylinder paired to an eight-speed automatic transmission in front-drive models and a seven-speed dual-clutch automatic in all-wheel-drive examples. The new engine makes 158 horsepower and 184 lb-ft of torque at just 1,750 rpm.

Those power and torque figures put the Taos right in the heart of the segment, just topping the Chevrolet Trailblazer's 155 hp and 174 lb-ft of torque but falling shy of the top-spec Kia Seltos SX's 175 hp and 195 lb-ft.

The automaker targeted best-in-class fuel efficiency, but we'll have to wait for the EPA to test the Taos for confirmation of that. For now, the leader of the subcompact SUV segment is the front-drive Nissan Kicks, which delivers an EPA-estimated 31/36/33 mpg city/highway/combined. Consider that the Taos' bogey.

The engine isn't the only big news. Volkswagen says it didn't want to make



a stripped-out base model and instead sought to pack in features across the lineup. Surprisingly, Volkswagen's Digital Cockpit (a digital gauge cluster optional on other, pricier VWs) is standard across all Taos models. Even the base S-trimmed cars will do away with a physical gauge cluster in favor of Volkswagen's customizable digital instruments.

Volkswagen will sell the Taos in S, SE, and SEL trims, and even the entry-level S will come with push-button ignition, automatic LED headlights, and some driver assist features. But if it's safety kit you want, VW's available IQ Drive package ups the ante with frontal collision warning, active blind-spot monitoring, adaptive cruise control, lane keep assist, and other safety goodies. Other options, such as cooled seats, a heated steering wheel, and 10-color LED ambient lighting, will be available on higher-trimmed cars. A panoramic sunroof, though, is an option across the entire Taos range.

You can expect the Taos to be priced similarly to the Crosstrek and CX-30, starting somewhere around \$22,000 to \$23,000. **Nick Yekikian**



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Intake

2021 McLaren 765LT

FIRST DRIVE



It talks to you, this McLaren, the chassis and steering and powertrain and brakes engaging in a deeply meaningful running dialog that lets you know exactly what is happening, and why, all the time. There is perhaps no other roadgoing supercar in the business where the relationship between human and hardware is as expressively intimate as the 765LT.

The 765LT's rear bodywork is indeed longer than that of the 720S it's derived from, as the "Long Tail" moniker suggests—by precisely 0.4 inch, courtesy of a new rear bumper and a full-width active rear spoiler that helps increase downforce on the rear axle by 25 percent. And despite the name, the 765LT, ironically, gains more length at the nose. A new front splitter, front bumper, and front floor extend the front overhang by 1.6 inches to help boost downforce on the front axle.

Suspension changes include springs and damper hardware, new software for the linked hydraulic active suspension, and a lower front ride height. The front track has also been widened and roll stiffness increased. The braking system is straight from the wild McLaren Senna. The standard tire is a specially developed, track-friendly Pirelli P Zero Trofeo R.

McLaren has boosted the engine's output to 755 hp and 590 lb-ft of torque, increases of 45 hp and 22 lb-ft over the 720S. The seven-speed dual-clutch transmission has lower ratios that help deliver

15 percent quicker in-gear acceleration and enable a 205-mph top speed.

A meticulous mass reduction program has trimmed 176 pounds, bringing it just under 3,000 pounds in the lightest configuration. Light weight and big power mean the 765LT is quick. McLaren claims it will sprint to 60 mph in 2.7 seconds—a number we suspect is conservative given the 720S we tested did it in 2.5 seconds—and will cover the quarter mile in 9.9 seconds.

Fan the right-hand paddle, and the transmission rips through the ratios, the 4.0-liter scarcely pausing for breath, the impellers in the twin turbos barely slowing. The 765LT doesn't seem to torque-punch out of the turns. Instead, it surfs a surge of power that runs all the way to the redline.

At the same time, the LT is much more planted under braking and through corners than the 720S. It doesn't have the rock-steady stability of the Senna, especially under heavy braking or through fast corners, but through mid- and slow-speed corners, there's not much difference.

The clarity and depth of the chassis' feedback means that although it's a very fast car on a track, it's anything but scary fast. The McLaren has the full complement of electronic nannies—all of which can be dialed back to zero—but the interventions are teachable moments, not angry raps over the knuckles. Pay attention, and the 765LT will help you become a smoother, more precise—faster—driver. **Angus MacKenzie**

SPECS PRICE \$358,000 LAYOUT Mid-engine, RWD, 2-pass, 2-door coupe ENGINE 4.0L/755-hp/590-lb-ft twin-turbo DOHC 32-valve V-8 TRANSMISSION 7-speed twin-clutch auto CURB WEIGHT 3,000 lb (mfr) WHEELBASE 105.1 in L x W x H 181.1 x 81.1 x 47.0 in 0-60 MPH 2.7 sec (mfr est) EPA FUEL ECON 14/18/15 mpg ENERGY CONSUMPTION, CITY/HWY 241/187 kWh/100 miles CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB 1.25 lb/mile ON SALE Currently

REAR VIEW

From the *MotorTrend* Archive ...

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MOTOR TREND

Catalytic Mufflers & Reactors

Unser, Jones, Bignotti tell why the Johnny Lightning 500 wins

Hornet·Comet·Demon·Nova Test

Chevy and Ford Shoot At VW



COMPARISON TEST: Vega • Pinto • Beetle

50

JAN 1971

PRICE: \$0.50

America's new Chevrolet Vega and Ford Pinto took on the bug-sized gorilla in the room in our January 1971 issue. Although the basic

VW Beetle design was 33 years old by the time we wrote this comparison, the Volkswagen handily won this shootout, due to its superior quality, cost, power, and performance. Despite the loss, the Vega would go on to win our 1971 Car of the Year award.



30

JAN 1991

PRICE: \$2.95

We dedicated this cover 30 years ago to American V-8s. Taking top billing: a twin-turbo Pontiac Firebird Trans Am, a Roush-turned twin-turbo Ford Mustang GT, and a 454-powered Chevrolet Camaro. The 640-hp Trans Am was unsurprisingly the fastest.

10

JAN 2011

PRICE: \$4.99

Just like the issue you're holding in your hands, our January 2011 issue featured our Car of the Year competition. That year the revolutionary Chevrolet Volt plug-in hybrid was our winner. For this year's winner, turn over to page 52.



2021 Volkswagen ID4 Prototype

FIRST DRIVE



Before we detail our experiences with a preproduction Volkswagen ID4, let's take a quick glance at the competition. After all, electric SUVs are sprouting like weeds these days. At \$39,995 before applicable tax incentives, the ID4 undercuts the Tesla Model Y and Ford Mustang Mach-E and offers more range than the base version of the Ford (250 miles to 230). A base Model Y is almost \$10,000 more expensive, and even though it offers more range, some buyers might not be able to bridge that price gap.

Once you move your eyes from the spec sheet and price tag, you'll want to take a look at the car in the metal. The ID4 doesn't look like a large SUV from the outside, and it isn't, being smaller than the current U.S.-spec Tiguan in every dimension. But when you open the doors and peer at the rear legroom or slot yourself into the comfy faux leather-covered driver's seat and gaze over the expansive, clutter-free dashboard, the ID4 feels a size bigger than its dimensions would imply.

The driving position is ideal for a compact crossover—high without being lofty, and still making you feel as if you're sitting in the thing rather than on it.

As for starting the ID4, you don't. There is a start-stop button on the right side of the steering column, but the idea is you'll almost never have to use it. Once the car senses you in the driver's seat and the key fob somewhere inside the car, it clicks itself on and is ready to go. Reach for the funky gear selector switch to the right of the digital driver's display, give it a little upward twist to select "D" for drive, and off you go.

Although the example we drove was a prototype, Volkswagen insisted that it was representative of what customers will be getting. We believe it; from the moment we put our foot on the accelerator, the ID4 felt finished. As is the case with virtually all electric motors, response from the 201-hp permanent-magnet synchronous unit mounted on the rear axle was instant, and the pedal response was perfectly linear.

Even though there's nothing in the way of noticeable feedback, the steering is wonderfully accurate and linear, so placing the ID4 in a corner or in a parking spot is a snap.

Among primary controls, the braking felt like the car's weakest point. As with nearly every other EV, most of the braking in almost all driving is handled via the regenerative system, the better to deliver otherwise wasted energy back into the system. An overall lack of feedback in the pedal, though, will take time to get used to. Indeed, we often stabbed at the brakes too hard, inducing a lurching stop.

The ID4 is a better driver than any Volkswagen SUV you can buy right now, and by quite a margin. But that's not the only thing it does better than its gas-powered stablemates. In contrast to, say, the VW Atlas we tested earlier this year, the ID4's buttoned-down and supple ride is a revelation. The big three-row Atlas SUV simply never settles down, but small surface imperfections don't upset the ID4 at all, and even large undulations revealed excellent body control. Larger impacts would occasionally deliver a big thump through the seat bottom, but we attribute some of that to this car's 20-inch wheels and short tire sidewalls.

The charming, minimalist look of the interior can be described as refined, but the cabin designers decided to use capacitive touch controls for almost everything, resulting in tricky-to-learn and occasionally imprecise ergonomics.

There's a lot riding on the ID4 for VW, and from what we've seen thus far, it's planning to come out swinging this spring. **Nick Yekikian**



Frank Markus

Technologue

2-Speed, Perchance to Dream ... of sub-3-second 0–60 times and 200-mph top speeds

Elon Musk's original Tesla Roadster used a two-speed transmission. It proved problematic, so he dropped the extra ratio and still delivered cars and SUVs capable of both brutal acceleration and license-endangering top speeds. So who needs multiple gears? Gearing an electric motor to deliver strong launch torque and then spinning it fast enough for autobahn speeds presents serious cooling challenges and reduces efficiency. Hence today's fastest EVs—like the Porsche Taycan, the Pininfarina Battista, and Rimac C Two—use a two-speed transmission.

Why a two-speed transmission when 10-speeds are readily available? Electric motors have a vastly broader “sweet spot” of efficient torque delivery than combustion engines, so they don't need frequent shifting to remain efficient. A low range with roughly double the ratio of the high range generally suffices for passenger vehicles. Adding a second ratio should boost overall efficiency unless the transmission adds parasitic losses like that original Tesla transmission, Porsche's twin-clutch, and Rimac's planetary transmissions do. That's where this novel Ingear transmission design from Toronto-based supplier Inmotive comes in.

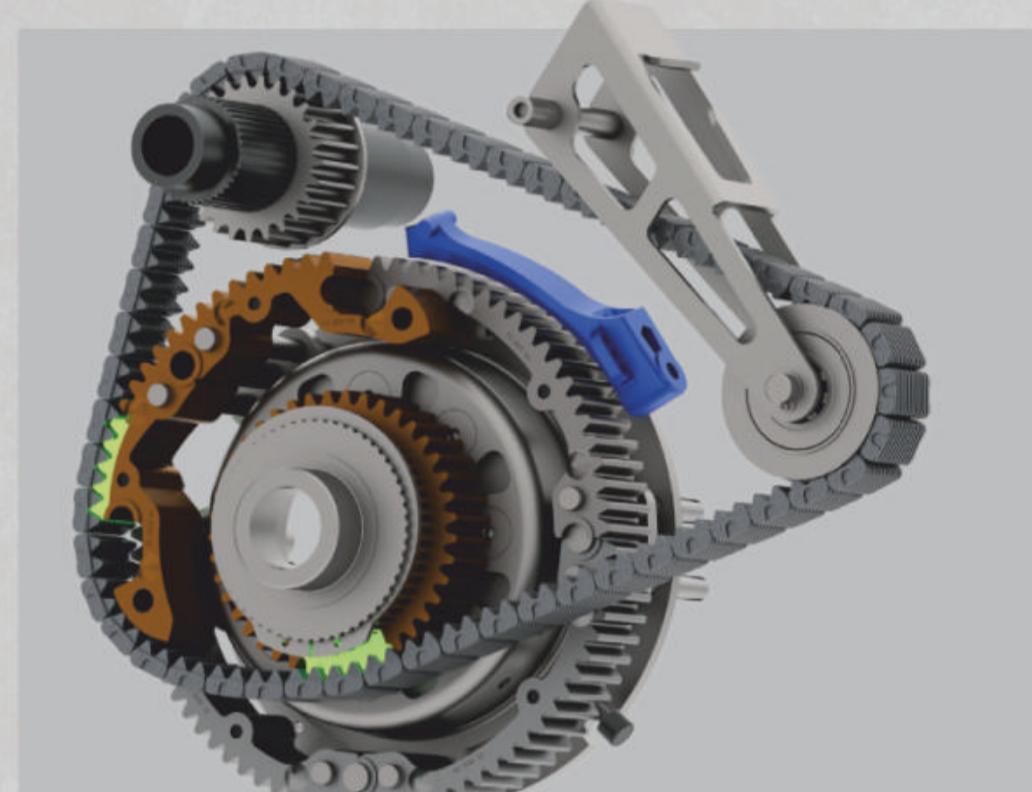
Chief technical officer Anthony Wong started out trying to improve upon a bicycle's derailleur gears with a design that didn't require the chain to move laterally. With the chain remaining in one plane, he reckoned, he could use a super-strong chain from a transfer case or engine valvetrain.

His brainstorm was to “assemble” the larger (lower-ratio) gear by sliding segments of it into position in the open triangle that exists between the input (pedal crank), the output (axle), and the chain tensioner (derailleur) while maintaining chain contact with the smaller (high-ratio) gear until the other gear was almost fully “assembled.” This maintains continuous torque transmission while motor-torque management ensures shift smoothness.

When shifting from high to low, the first “key” segment that slides into place includes a curved kneelike feature that guides the chain onto the larger-radius gear without kinking it. As everything rotates, four other segments slide into place. The entire shift occurs within one rotation of the output shaft, typically below 50 mph. When shifting from low to high gear, the final large-gear segment includes another kneelike guide to ease the chain down onto the smaller gear without kinking, and a simple spring tensioner controls chain slack.

The five interlocking gear segments slide on pins that transfer torque to the output shaft, and a patent-pending finger deflector engages roller pins that move each segment into or out of contact with the chain. This works like some variable-valve-lift cam-lobe-shifting devices and

Adding a second transmission ratio should boost overall efficiency.



requires no closed-loop control to account for wear, etc.

Here's where the Ingear concept trumps the established two-speed EV trannies: There are no losses from multiple gearsets being paired simultaneously and no rolling contact losses. Because no torque gets transmitted while the segments are moving, none is required to keep them in either position, and because the whole works is splash-lubricated, there is no need for a hydraulic pump.

Straight teeth on the gears and chains don't generate the side loads and friction of angled “helical” gear teeth, so the unit requires no axial roller bearings or external cooling, making it inherently more efficient than even today's two-stage single-reduction helical gearsets. A similar chain and gears are currently used in the Chevy

Volt without creating noise in its EV mode. The unit packages around the differential gear, no exotic materials are needed, and it should require fewer parts than other two-speed concepts.

Ingear should cost about \$150 more than a single reduction gearset and deliver 7–15 percent greater range, with a 15 percent improvement in acceleration, towing, and grade-climbing capability. Alternatively, fitting a smaller, lighter battery (which could enable weight savings elsewhere) could deliver net savings of as much as \$1,500 at similar range.

Inmotive currently has development contracts with two global OEMs, is in discussion with several others, and hopes to bring Ingear to market within three years. Oh, and yes, the design is scalable, from giant wind turbines down to the original bicycle idea, and the company has tinkered with a four-speed Ingear design for a non-automotive industrial application. ■

Here we see a shift in progress from low to high (large to small) gear. The blue arm directs each brown gear segment to retract after it leaves contact with the chain. The green segments indicate where torque is simultaneously transmitted to both gears. Note the curved “knees” that manage the chain's bend radius. Rotation here is clockwise.

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Jonny Lieberman

Every Day I Am Driving



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Cars are going away and getting better at the same time

For the first time in my decade at *MotorTrend*, I began the Car of the Year finalist debate—the one where we pick the winner—having no idea what car would win. In my heart of hearts, I wanted the zero-emission Porsche Taycan to emerge victorious, mostly because the air quality from the fires burning around California meant that my 3-year-old was forced to remain indoors for a five-day stretch. Anything to mitigate that.

That's just how I felt walking in. Our Of The Year awards use specific criteria, however, to ensure that a person's feelings don't dominate the process. We vote for the cars based on our criteria. Trouble was, this year five of the six finalists were exceptional. Normally, it comes down to this car versus that car, or one is the clear favorite. This year? Wide open. I think the reason why is because as the car market shrinks, the offerings are much improved.

Take this year's winner, the 2021 Mercedes-Benz E-Class. I went on the Lisbon launch of the then brand-new 2017 model year W213 E-Class and spent much of the resulting review talking about taxis. Sure, the E-Class was a fine automobile, but good enough to be our Car of the Year? Four years ago we picked the Chevrolet Bolt. Although I found that redesigned E-Class to be "sturdy" and a worthy successor to the E that came before, the car wasn't all that exciting. I assumed the same would hold true for this 2021 refresh. Then we drove it.

A little inside baseball for you: We actually spend a bit too much time each year writing up "walkarounds" for every Of The Year contender. These never-to-be-published internal briefing documents list a vehicle's reasons for being in the competition: vital stats, technical data (like powertrains and suspensions), competitive sets, and a list of cool facts and features. It's essential info for our judges to get up to speed on the myriad vehicles we are about to test in quick succession. I happened to write the walkaround for the 2021 E-Class, and let me tell you, it was a struggle. Because on paper not much had changed. Once we all got behind the wheel, though, we discovered how Mercedes had made the refreshed E that much better.

But the winning Benz wasn't alone in this regard. Take the new Nissan Sentra. Based on the previous Sentra, if you'd told me before the competition that the new version would be a finalist, I would have laughed at you. Then if you'd told me before the final judges' vote that the Sentra was in fact our winner, I would have nodded yeah, that makes sense, for not only is

the eighth-generation Sentra a great compact car on its own, but the little Nissan was also able to hold its own against the German titan brands: BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and Porsche.

Speaking of which, we had a hell of a time not giving the Golden Calipers to the BMW 840i Gran Coupe, as there simply wasn't anything wrong with it. Relevance, perhaps, but that's not one of our criteria. And man, is it a good car. Same story for the Porsche, and same story for the Mercedes CLA, which, like the Sentra, is a massive improvement over the previous generation.

Even the cars that weren't finalists were pretty dang great. Both the Audi S4 and the BMW M440i had no glaring flaws, the BMW's nose notwithstanding. They didn't move the needle enough within their given market

segments to move on. But, boy, are those two excellent automobiles. The same can be said of two offerings from Genesis, the G80 and G90. How about the Cadillac CT4, and especially the CT4-V, the one car that didn't make the finals that broke my heart (a little)? Much better than the ATS it effectively replaces.

Even the Chrysler Pacifica—a minivan, one of my less favorite car breeds—was better than before. Best minivan ever? Runaway, unfounded nostalgia for the AWD Mitsubishi Delica notwithstanding, oh my yes!

Trucks and SUVs are crowding cars out of the marketplace, true. But if this year's field is any indication, automakers are putting forth cars that are better than ever. ■

This year's Car of the Year was wide open. Why? Because as the car market shrinks, the offerings are much improved.

For the first time in my decade at *MotorTrend*, I entered Car of the Year voting believing any finalist could win. Well, five of the six.



SACRED STONE OF THE SOUTHWEST IS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION



Centuries ago, Persians, Tibetans and Mayans considered turquoise a gemstone of the heavens, believing the striking blue stones were sacred pieces of sky. Today, the rarest and most valuable turquoise is found in the American Southwest—but the future of the blue beauty is unclear.

On a recent trip to Tucson, we spoke with fourth generation turquoise traders who explained that less than five percent of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry and only about twenty mines in the Southwest supply gem-quality turquoise. Once a thriving industry, many Southwest mines have run dry and are now closed.

We found a limited supply of turquoise from Arizona and snatched it up for our **Sedona Turquoise Collection**. Inspired by the work of those ancient craftsmen and designed to showcase the exceptional blue stone, each stabilized vibrant cabochon features a unique,

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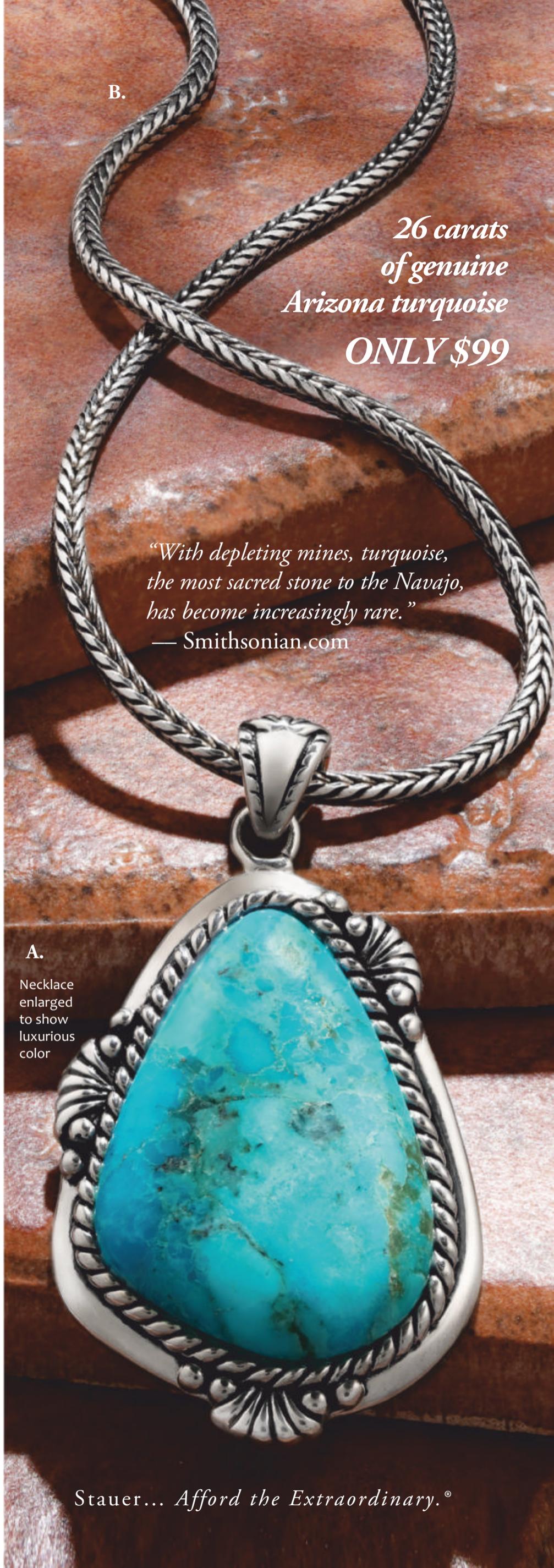
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Interview



The prototype MDX continues the return to Acura's premium performance roots.

Jon Ikeda

Vice president and Acura brand officer for American Honda Motor Co.

Jon Ikeda spent most of his career as a designer before becoming Acura general manager in 2015 and brand officer in 2019. He is working to rebuild the premium performance marque, bringing back its heritage and injecting excitement while further differentiating Acura from the Honda brand.

When did you start this latest relaunch of the brand? Maybe 2015. That's when the NSX came online. And that's when we were completely reorienting ourselves back to precision-crafted performance, our heritage. If we're going to be a performance brand, we needed to have the supercar as the halo. ... I'm not going to lie to you, we did wander around a little bit, and we've refocused. NSX happened, racing happened, A-Specs, but the RDX was one of the first of the next generation of cars for us, a proof point to say, "Hey, we're ready to show you what the new-look Acura is all about."

The RDX became more premium?

We went more upscale. Our transaction prices went up, but we're still conquering. We're trying to build emotion again, make fun-to-drive cars again. And it resonated well in the market. RDX did well.

What is the strategy for TLX? We wanted a blank sheet of paper. For the people that are left driving sedans, like myself, you need to get that first knockout punch and have that presence. Making low, sleek, long, wide vehicles is what Acura was known for back in the late '80s, early '90s, and we're refocused on that. With the RLX leaving our sedan lineup, it freed us to do the proportions and sizes we wanted. It's close to an A7 or Panamera. We were already going to say goodbye to the low-end version of the current TLX, the four-cylinder model. Type S is coming right around the corner.

Other models in the works? We've got an MDX coming right behind [the TLX], and following that is the [TLX] Type S. We're completely revamping everything. The



MILLENNIALS KNOW ACURA. WHAT THEY FELL IN LOVE WITH, WE NEED TO DELIVER."

RDX has shown the way and given us confidence that we've chosen the right path.

Will all future models get a Type S?

That's the plan. The Type S is the sports derivative of all of our lineup. We need to focus on them. The equity we want to put on Type S is huge. Yes, we want to put Type S on everything, starting with the TLX. We've already talked about it being on the MDX.

Why give TLX its own dedicated platform? Going forward, we will have to look at how we share things and whatnot, but for this vehicle, it's [new from the] ground up. It's its own thing.

Can future products use the platform?

That's not in discussion. As future products get vetted out, who knows? But right now, this chassis is specifically designed for this vehicle. If we were to expand and do derivatives, there's possibilities.

Can Acura share with Honda? I'm not [into] the big "Honda can't have what Acura has" kind of thing. I don't think that's the way this brand started. We were just trying to do really cool,

high-performance products, and it gets expensive. It's family. The whole, "They can't have this," or "We can't get that," I don't think that exists.

Is TLX the new flagship? The flagship is still the NSX. Traditionally, you would think a flagship is a sedan, but that's not how I think about it.

Will you still play in the full-size sedan market? The RLX is discontinued. So the TLX is the biggest sedan we have.

Nothing larger planned? Currently, not on the agenda.

With the TLX getting bigger, is there more room for the ILX and something else? We have to have an entry [model], and there's some space there. We'll look at how to fill that correctly. We have the ILX, and we have other things that are going to be coming as we transition to cover that area.

How do you successfully move Acura upmarket? We had a successful heritage. It isn't reinventing yourself so much as going back to our roots. If you look at our successes with Integras, Legends, and the Gen-1 NSXs, we were innovative, different, focused on our performance. That's what we'll reorient ourselves on. Millennials in their early 40s were 10, 12 years old looking at Integras and Type Rs. So they know Acura. What they fell in love with, we need to deliver. When I see a Gen-1 NSX enthusiast get an RDX A-Spec and is excited about it, that's telling me we're doing the right things.

Is a third-gen NSX in the works?
We can't talk about that.

What are Acura's plans for electrification? When we first came out with a hybrid NSX, everybody wasn't on board, including me. When the CEO said, "We're going to do a hybrid," I said, "What?" But developing that technology around the supercar has shown us what we could do with electric motors and batteries. Electrification is happening. **Alisa Priddle**

Your Say...

Old-School Overlanding

Angus MacKenzie's tales of driving through the Australian Outback brought back fond memories of my grandfather, Joe Liberman (*not* the senator).

In the 1920s, he owned cars when few others did. As a child, I loved hearing his stories about family trips. Motoring in the 1920s was a real adventure. Roads were at best paved with macadam and at worst graded dirt. Driving to Upstate New York, the steep climb to Wurtsboro always caused numerous cars, including my grandfather's 1928 Hupmobile, to overheat, requiring drivers to stop and trudge down to a nearby creek to replenish radiators with fresh, cool water.

Most motor trips involved setting up camp in a farmer's field. These evolved into campgrounds, then to cabins, auto courts, and motels, which dotted major federal highways in my childhood.

By the 1950s, when most Americans owned at least one car, my grandfather had given up driving and traveled everywhere by bus and rail. He never explained to me why he hung up his license for good.

Phil Lieberman
Sarasota, Florida

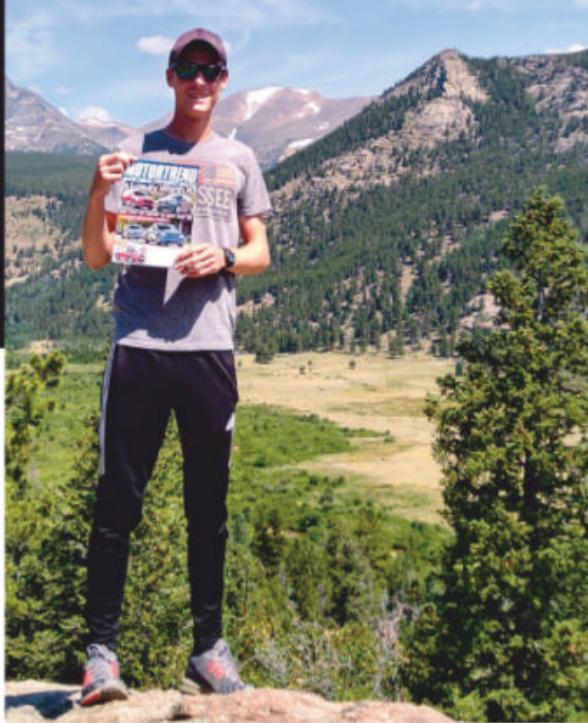
Evolution of a Purist

I used to be a rear-wheel-drive, naturally aspirated, three-pedal purist, until 2015, when I decided I needed a four-door hatchback. I selected a Ford Focus ST and have been pleasantly surprised by the low-end torque of the 2.0-liter turbo I-4 and by the balanced handling, especially for a front-wheel-drive car. I have since added a 2019 Mustang GT V-8, which confirms the view of your article "Holy Turbo Terrors" that a front-drive hot hatch feels lighter and zippier. But out on the open road, the Mustang gets the nod. If I had to choose between the two, it would be an agonizing decision, but I guess my Mustang would win because they do not make four-cylinders that sound that good.

Tony Nazzaro
via Email

This Is Your Dad's Car

I was excited to see and read Kim Reynolds' article about the Lexus LC 500 Convertible. Guess what, Kim? I could be your dad and loved your description of the



Reader on location

It ain't easy being a member of the class of 2020, but 18-year-old **Matthew Schonemann** of Nashville, Tennessee, made the most of a bad situation by taking a little trip with us this past summer after his major life milestone.

"Hey, *MotorTrend*! This year I graduated high school, and I wanted to travel this summer, so where did I go? Rocky Mountain National Park, of course! It's always been a dream to visit the park, and I'm so thankful I got to go this summer. I always make sure to bring the latest issue with me on road trips, and this one was no exception! This magazine went almost 4,000 miles across the country with me. Thank you for always putting out good content, pandemic or not."

Thanks for bringing us along, and congratulations, Matthew!



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car. Full disclosure, I ordered one, and it should be here by the time this is printed.

I am 77, and I could not easily get out of my last two Porsches, a 911 and a Boxster S. But I always want a sporty convertible. Your description of the car is perfect for me, especially the parts you're not in love with. I have no real need for a back seat, but I need a place for golf clubs. Clubs won't fit in the trunk of the 911 or in the Boxster. Had to put them in the passenger seat, so I traveled alone and couldn't leave the top down, even if I ran in for a cup of coffee! I was looking for a convertible that was plush, had great fit and finish, and that caused people to turn their heads. I also wanted a V-8, like when we were kids, and 470 hp. I don't need a track car, but a cruiser that's fun to drive and rare. I will trade cramped legroom for "leather and its spiderweb of stitching."

Your dad car and its shortcomings for you are perfect for a dad like me.

Barry Feldscher
Voorhees, New Jersey

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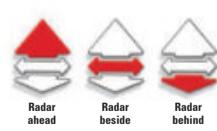
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Contenders

PRO Sporty design • still a value • high-quality interior details **CON** Lazy transmission • below-average mpg • small back seat

2021 Acura TLX

It's best not to judge a car by its design, but sometimes we can't help it. The 2021 Acura TLX's more premium proportions and sporty detailing instantly distinguish the luxury sport sedan from its predecessor, but there's more to the picture than just styling.

Priced like a compact luxury sedan from Europe but built closer to a midsize, the Acura makes a compelling value play. But as a tweener, getting a sense of where it actually resides in the market can be a challenge.

"This is an unexpectedly sweet car to drive," testing director Kim Reynolds said of our A-Spec AWD test car at the track. "There's a very mild but nice tremble to the steering that gives it an alive feeling, but the best quality is how enthusiastically it turns in."

With a standard 272-hp turbo-four engine, the 2021 TLX will beat with the heart of a turbo-six in Type S form (when it arrives in spring 2021). Both engines are mated to a 10-speed automatic that—at least with a 2.0T four-cylinder engine—produced

divergent opinions among the *MotorTrend* staff. A couple editors didn't have an issue with the transmission tuning (as we noted in our initial review), but others found its gearshifts subpar compared to European and Korean competitors.

"The engine makes good power, but the gearing of this transmission is far too tall and shifts far too slow to make good use of it," features editor Christian Seabaugh said. "The TLX's sheet-metal is writing checks this car just can't cash."

Associate road test editor Erick Ayapana agreed, saying he "would enjoy this car more if the gearbox was more responsive."

Then again, if the transmission were more responsive, the fuel economy might dip even further into irrelevance. As it is, the 2021 TLX 2.0T is less efficient than many competitors, including the Audi A4 and Alfa Romeo Giulia

At least AWD is available on both engines, not something the last-gen TLX offered. (FWD is standard.) And as with other



Acuras, value remains a strong point—even though this new car carries an MSRP thousands above its predecessor. For less than \$40,000, a base 2021 TLX includes LED headlights, real aluminum trim, a 10.2-inch infotainment system, a 10-speaker sound system, heated front seats, and AcuraWatch active safety tech.

That 10.2-inch infotainment interface isn't a touchscreen; its touchpad controller's learning

curve and distracting nature divided the staff. As someone who spent a year in a 2019 RDX with a similar system, I know the system's one-to-one touchpad-to-screen-space mapping can make things easier than tasks might be with a Lexus touchpad. But most judges felt other touchscreen or scroll-wheel systems provide superior interfaces. However, few cars will feel as well-screwed-together as the Acura.

"First impression of the cabin is excellent," senior features editor Jonny Lieberman said. "All the usual Acura stuff is here, but it looks high-quality. It even feels like quality. The A-Spec steering wheel is the steering wheel BMW owners have been dreaming of for a decade—beefy without being needlessly fat."

Great, but the new TLX can't overcome its issues of efficiency or performance of intended function. When we crowned the Genesis G70 our 2019 Car of the Year, the car wowed us with its remarkable balance—it's a small sedan that's engaging to drive but still has a good ride and premium feel.

The Acura doesn't inspire the same praise from our staff. The TLX confidently splits a couple well-stocked segments of smartly equipped luxury sport sedans, and we appreciate the TLX 2.0T for what it is—a good premium option with sporty styling and value but without the chops to back up its looks. **Zach Gale**

PRICED LIKE A COMPACT LUXURY SEDAN BUT BUILT CLOSER TO A MIDSIZE, THE TLX MAKES A COMPELLING VALUE PLAY.



SPECS	2021 Acura TLX SH-AWD A-Spec
Base Price/As Tested	\$47,275/\$47,275
Power (SAE net)	272 hp @ 6,500 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	280 lb-ft @ 1,600 rpm
Accel, 0-60 mph	7.0 sec
Quarter Mile	15.4 sec @ 91.5 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	127 ft
Lateral Acceleration	0.83 g (avg)
MT Figure Eight	26.9 sec @ 0.64 g (avg)
EPA City/Hwy/Comb	21/29/24 mpg



VEHICLE LAYOUT Front-engine, AWD, 5-pass, 4-door sedan **ENGINE/TRANSMISSION** 2.0L turbo DOHC 16-valve I-4/10-speed automatic
CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST) 3,969 lb (57/43%) **WHEELBASE** 113.0 in **LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT** 194.6 x 75.2 x 56.4 in
ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY/100 miles CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB 0.81 lb/mile

PRO Excellent interior • great ride quality • lovable steering and handling **CON** Mild refresh • high price • non-linear brake feel

2021 Audi S4

The 2021 Audi A4 is a midcycle refresh. But some refreshes are milder than others.

The sheetmetal of the A4 and sibling S4 is ever so slightly tweaked, the infotainment and digital dash screens are new, and not much else has changed; engines and transmissions carry over. Why bother to include it in our Car of the Year competition? Well, the A4 has impressed us with its dynamics and chic, understated design inside and out. Besides, maybe Audi tuned a thousand little things that when summed wow us out of our socks.

Among those little things, the 2021 A4 receives a 12-volt hybrid system that adds 13 hp to the gas engine's output—meaning the powertrain has been updated,

meeting the hurdle for entry. Did the A4 squeak its way into our competition? Ja, one could say.

Audi only sent us the 349-hp S4, and although we would have preferred to also have the A4, no one was complaining too loudly. "A peach of a car," testing director and figure-eight maestro Kim Reynolds called it. "Here's an AWD system that really digs in and goes." Reynolds also found the structure to be "solid as heck." Yes, that's how he talks.

We also all took note that the brand-new Acura TLX is not only a competitor of the A4/S4 but is also front-drive-based. Let's just say we all preferred the Audi, though we acknowledge that the TLX Type S is the one that would compete against the S4. Acura will have its work cut out.

We really shouldn't go any further without talking about the interior. Although the screens and displays have been updated (the infotainment screen grows from 8.3 inches to 10.1, adds touch capability, and loses the scroll wheel), the functionality is the



same. Why mess with success? "Virtual Cockpit is still fantastic," Buyer's Guide director Zach Gale said. "It's maybe the easiest in the industry to use and one of the best in terms of visual options. Wonderful job."

Let's get back to how well the S4 drives. When the A4 was new a few years ago, it came in second place (out of eight) in our \$399-lease-deal comparison test—losing to our eventual 2018 Car of the Year, the Alfa Romeo Giulia. Why didn't the Audi get first? It simply didn't drive as well as the Alfa. But now we're talking about the S4. "It's easy to adjust your steering angle via the throttle, which is always a hallmark of a good performance



car," features editor Christian Seabaugh said. "You can really feel that rear diff doing its thing." Reynolds called the ride "surprisingly supple." Seabaugh compared it to the BMW 4 Series: "The M440i wasn't bad, but the S4 was far more forgiving without any obvious drawbacks."

There's also something, well, *je ne sais quoi* about the steering. But in a good way, a classic Audi way. I'll let Reynolds explain: "I like the steering but struggle to explain why. What's nice here is the sense of tremble in the rim that gives you an illusion of road feel and a sense of where the four tires are and what they're doing."

To summarize the S4, here's editor-in-chief Mark Rechtin: "Same old S4, just with a better center screen and more dynamic infographics. If someone asks, 'Hey, I'm looking for an entry-luxury car, one that makes me feel like I'm driving something modern but isn't going to be really confusing, what should I get?' I answer Audi A4, and if you have a few extra bucks, the S4." Hard to argue with that.

Jonny Lieberman



THERE'S SOMETHING JE NE SAIS QUOI ABOUT THE STEERING—IN A GOOD WAY. A CLASSIC AUDI WAY.



SPECS	2020 Audi S4
Base Price/As Tested	\$50,895/\$66,490
Power (SAE net)	349 hp @ 6,200 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	369 lb-ft @ 3,200 rpm
Accel, 0-60 mph	4.2 sec
Quarter Mile	12.8 sec @ 107.0 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	112 ft
Lateral Acceleration	0.91 g (avg)
MT Figure Eight	25.2 sec @ 0.75 g (avg)
EPA City/Hwy/Comb	20/27/23 mpg

VEHICLE LAYOUT Front-engine, AWD, 5-pass, 4-door sedan **ENGINE/TRANSMISSION** 3.0L turbo DOHC 24-valve V-6/8-speed automatic
CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST) 3,921 lb (57/43%) **WHEELBASE** 111.0 in **LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT** 187.5 x 72.7 x 56.2 in
ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY 169/125 kWh/100 miles **CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB** 0.86 lb/mile

Contenders

PRO Strong engine • hints of sportiness • lots of standard tech **CON** Choppy ride • tight back seat • head-scratching design

2021 BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe

The BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe is the Bavarian brand's newest and least expensive sedan, slotting right under the 3 Series sedan. Unlike most BMW sedans, however, it rides on the same front-drive-based platform as the X1 and X2 crossovers (and the Mini lineup), giving BMW buyers yet another choice if they're looking to spend less than \$40,000. The price tag is certainly attractive, but judges at this year's Car of the Year competition wondered if the funky four-door is befitting of BMW's roundel badge.

The lineup includes the 228i xDrive Gran Coupe and the M235i xDrive Gran Coupe. Unlike the X1 and X2, which are offered in front- or all-wheel-drive configurations, the 2 Series Gran Coupe is only available with the latter (which is fine by us). Pricing for the 2020 228i xDrive Gran Coupe starts at \$38,495, which includes standard features such as LED headlights,

parking sensors, split-folding rear seats, forward collision warning, and Apple CarPlay—all important stuff to lure in young buyers while also countering the stigma that BMW nickels and dimes its customers for well-equipped cars.

For this year's competition, BMW sent the top-spec M235i, which packs more features and a potent 2.0-liter turbo-four churning out 301 horsepower and 332 lb-ft of torque. It got off to a good start at the hands of our test team at our figure eight course, where testing director Kim Reynolds had some fun with the four-door 2 Series.

"It turns in very, very well after braking," Reynolds said. "The power isn't overwhelming, but it's solid and pulls strongly. The car has a lightness to it—not a sense of being of inferior construction, but simply being light on its feet. Fun to modify its attitude and rotate the tail on corner exit."

Judges also gave the 2 high marks for its engine note. "Along with the Acura TLX, this turbo-four is my pick for one of the



best-sounding engines in small luxury sport four-doors at around \$50,000," Buyer's Guide director Zach Gale said.

And although its M-tuned suspension was an asset on the figure eight, most judges felt its overall ride quality needed improvement. Our test car's 19-inch wheels with low-profile run-flat tires likely didn't help matters.

"It rides rough over bad surfaces," senior features editor Jonny Lieberman said. "I think you could dial out some of this harshness and still maintain a sporty enough feel. And this isn't even

the real M version. I'm not sure what's going on at BMW, but the ride quality seems to be the last thing they're thinking about. Large bumps really upset the car." In our eyes, the Ultimate Driving Machine should be enjoyable both at the limit and while cruising the streets.

In addition to the rough ride, taller judges had difficulty sitting comfortably in the driver's seat. And most judges agreed the rear seats were not only cramped (leg- and headroom) but also awkward to get in and out of.

On the upside, judges praised the 2's well-crafted interior, soft leather, and clear sound system. The M235i's as-tested price tag, however, was harder to accept at \$50,795—which is more than enough coin to leave the dealership with a decently equipped 330i sedan that'll deliver better ride quality and more rear passenger room.

Then there's the matter of the styling, which bears little resemblance to the relatively handsome 2 Series coupe or previous BMW Gran Coupes. Although the 228i Gran Coupe has an enticing price tag, so do the X1 and X2. And not only are they better looking, but they are also perhaps better executions of BMW's front-drive platform. **Erick Ayapana**



JUDGES PRAISED THE 2 SERIES' WELL-CRAFTED INTERIOR.

SPECS	2020 BMW M235i xDrive Gran Coupe
Base Price/As Tested	\$46,495/\$50,795
Power (SAE net)	301 hp @ 5,000 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	332 lb-ft @ 1,750 rpm
Accel, 0-60 mph	4.8 sec
Quarter Mile	13.5 sec @ 102.3 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	108 ft
Lateral Acceleration	0.91 g (avg)
MT Figure Eight	25.8 sec @ 0.71 g (avg)
EPA City/Hwy/Comb	23/32/26 mpg



VEHICLE LAYOUT Front-engine, AWD, 5-pass, 4-door sedan **ENGINE/TRANSMISSION** 2.0L turbo DOHC 16-valve I-4/8-speed automatic
CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST) 3,532 lb (58/42%) **WHEELBASE** 105.1 in **LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT** 178.5 x 70.9 x 55.9 in
ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY 147/105 kWh/100 miles **CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB** 0.74 lb/mile



PRO Great engine • great handling • great ride **CON** That face • same old interior • gesture control

2021 BMW 4 Series

There is a well-traveled rumor that the BMW 4 Series exterior design team has been reassigned to styling door handles and seat belt mountings for the rest of their careers.

OK, maybe that's fake news. But it does prove that Germans have a sense of humor.

Regardless, buying a 4 Series for its dynamic thrills is going to result in people asking you lots of questions, starting not with, "How does it drive?" but rather, "When was your last eye exam?"

Which is a shame, because the M440i xDrive coupe is a blast.

But first, we must discuss design. BMW's signature kidney grilles are suffering from hydro-nephrosis. Maybe the design team wasn't allowed bathroom breaks on deadline, and this was their way of symbolically fighting back. As it stands, the ridiculously out-of-scale grille mars what would otherwise be a flashy front clip. Unfortunately, the side view isn't all that stunning as a means of compensation. From one perspective, it's what happens

when you ask Infiniti designers to pen the next Mustang.

With that onerous topic out of the way, features editor Christian Seabaugh moved on to better news. "I'm happy to report it drives better than it looks," he said. "Its turbo I-6 is impeccably smooth, and it encourages the driver to wring every last ounce of power out of it. Chassis is pretty nice—balanced and neutral, even with the addition of AWD. Rides far nicer than most M-badged BMWs I've driven this year. It appears like someone at M hasn't forgotten how to tune a sports car with a compliant yet firm ride."

Testing director Kim Reynolds added: "Nice, quick paddle shifts. Steering response is a highlight. A powerful car that's propelled fast to the next corner with a modest tail-out drift exiting. Moderate understeer that you can modulate with small throttle changes. Brakes are strong, but there's some decay of front tire grip."

Pew. At least BMW engineers weren't clowning. And here's the cool thing: This isn't even the M4,



as senior features editor Jonny Lieberman noted: "A few years ago, this would've been M3/M4 power levels. The transmission is absolutely great. The ride quality is quite good. We are so spoiled."

However, once out of boy-racer mode, one might notice significant low-frequency booming in the cabin, and the brakes that are so confident trail-braking into a decreasing-radius hairpin become choppy at parking lot speeds. But when you buy the M440i instead of the base 430i, you know that you're getting M Sport brakes. Wish we'd asked for a standard version to compare against.

Interior design follows traditional BMW styling points, which



means it's either brand-confident or tired and repetitive, depending on your level of cynicism. "It's a nice interior, but when you're starting a new generation and have the opportunity to start from a clean sheet, you should take advantage of that," *MotorTrend en Español*'s Miguel Cortina said. Viewing outward, the large B-pillar, small rear quarter window, and high side sills make for massive blind spots.

And although BMW has refined its iDrive infotainment system into a logical, smooth-running user interface, it relentlessly pushes its "gesture control" technology, which allows drivers to perform basic tasks without actually touching buttons or screens. But it works only sporadically, triggering Seabaugh to respond with a more universally recognized gesture.

Dynamically improved, yes. Design? Atrocious. Interior? Feels carryover. So much right but so much crucially wrong.

Mark Rechtein



SPECS	2021 BMW M440i xDrive
Base Price/As Tested	\$59,495/\$69,770
Power (SAE net)	382 hp @ 5,800 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	364 lb-ft @ 1,800 rpm
Accel, 0-60 mph	4.0 sec
Quarter Mile	12.6 sec @ 110.2 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	109 ft
Lateral Acceleration	0.93 g (avg)
MT Figure Eight	24.7 sec @ 0.78 g (avg)
EPA City/Hwy/Comb	22/30/25 mpg (est)

VEHICLE LAYOUT Front-engine, AWD, 4-pass, 2-door coupe **ENGINE/TRANSMISSION** 3.0L turbo DOHC 24-valve I-6/8-speed automatic
CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST) 3,960 lb (54/46%) **WHEELBASE** 112.2 in **LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT** 188.0 x 72.9 x 54.8 in
ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY 153/112 kWh/100 miles **CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB** 0.78 lb/mile

Contenders



PRO Larger than the competition • CT4-V's great drive • good looks **CON** Lacking luxury • poor engine sounds • rear seats for kids only

2021 Cadillac CT4

If you were the betting type, you might think that the odds-on favorite to win our 2021 Car of the Year award would be the Cadillac CT4. Why's that? Pedigree. Twice this past decade, a car underpinned by General Motors' excellent rear-drive Alpha platform has driven off with the Golden Calipers. The second-generation Cadillac CTS did so in 2014, followed two years later by the 2016 Chevrolet Camaro. Further, the Cadillac ATS, a car that in some ways the CT4 replaces, was a finalist in 2013.

So Cadillac has been known to bring it. The new CT4 rides on an updated version of that chassis—unsurprisingly dubbed Alpha II, which it shares with the larger CT5. The CT4's pedigree is certainly there, but how does it stack up against the criteria?

"I'm pleasantly surprised," features editor Christian Seabaugh said. "It's sort of the compact, rear-drive luxury sedan that cars like the E30 BMW were: tiny, luxurious, little sport sedans." Of course, luxury is in the eye of

the beholder, and Buyer's Guide director Zach Gale has a different eye. "The Mercedes CLA 250 looks like a luxury car even though parts of the interior don't feel like it," he said, "but this Cadillac doesn't look or feel like a luxury car inside. I need a touch more flair or flash."

Most judges felt ho-hum about the AWD Premium Luxury CT4 but at the same time loved the CT4-V. "A huge difference here compared to the CT4 is the tires' grip and braking power, which are intertwined," testing director Kim Reynolds said.

Here's where things get interesting: The two CT4s use the same 2.7-liter turbo-four. However, the optional 309-hp, 348-lb-ft version in the Premium Luxury CT4 is straight out of a Chevy Silverado, quite literally. "Hard acceleration really dramatizes a very poor, cheap, and unpleasant engine note," continued Reynolds, who has been professionally listening to cars for 39 years. "It sounds like an econocar. There's no excuse."

Ride quality was pretty solid in both versions of the CT4. Said



Seabaugh: "Even without the magnetic dampers, the ride quality and body control don't suffer in the regular CT4." Most felt that the V rode even sweeter, though a few of us noted that at freeway speeds, the CT4-V wasn't comfortable. From associate road test editor Erick Ayapana: "It seemed to struggle with straight-line stability at highway speeds."

Cadillac's preference to build "tweakers" rather than a "right-sized" car (the CT4 is larger than the Audi A3, BMW 2 Series, and Mercedes A-Class it competes against) pays dividends. That's what longer wheelbases do.

The more powerful CT4-V uses a whole bag of tricks to sound



better (active exhaust, synthesized noises via the stereo, and noise-canceling frequencies). It also drives better. One reason is the extra power, but GM's MagneRide shocks no doubt help, as does the CT4-V's rear-drive motivation.

Across the board, we all enjoyed the CT4-V. As the ever-wary Gale put it: "The V model feels more alive than the standard model. What I'm really curious about, though, is what the 2.0T engine is like." Yep, Caddy didn't offer us the base engine. Hmm.

In the end, we had a tale of two Cadillacs. One we simply did not care for. "If I was excited about the CT4-V, the regular CT4 is plain meh," MotorTrend en Español managing editor Miguel Cortina said. "There's nothing here that's engaging or special." Cadillac, here's your wish list for what to do for the refresh. **Jonny Lieberman**

ACROSS THE BOARD, WE ALL ENJOYED THE CT4-V.



CT4-V



SPECS	2020 Cadillac CT4 AWD 450T	2020 Cadillac CT4-V
Base Price/As Tested	\$42,990/\$46,690	\$45,490/\$51,540
Power (SAE net)	310 hp @ 5,600 rpm	325 hp @ 5,600 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	350 lb-ft @ 1,800 rpm	380 lb-ft @ 1,800 rpm
Accel, 0-60 mph	5.0 sec	5.5 sec
Quarter Mile	13.7 sec @ 97.3 mph	14.2 sec @ 95.2 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	123 ft	110 ft
Lateral Acceleration	0.83 g (avg)	0.94 g (avg)
MT Figure Eight	26.5 sec @ 0.67 g (avg)	25.4 sec @ 0.73 g (avg)
EPA City/Hwy/Comb	20/28/23 mpg	20/29/23 mpg

CT4; CT4-V VEHICLE LAYOUT Front-engine, AWD; RWD, 5-pass, 4-door sedan **ENGINE/TRANSMISSION** 2.7L turbo DOHC 16-valve I-4/10-speed automatic **CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)** 3,701 lb (54/46%); 3,603 lb (52/48%) **WHEELBASE** 109.3 in **LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT** 187.2 x 71.5 x 56.0 in **ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY** 169/120; 169/116 kW-hrs/100 miles **CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB** 0.85; 0.83 lb/mile

PRO Uconnect 5 infotainment • FamCam • a dozen USB ports **CON** AWD not available on hybrid • high floor • sitting position in second and third rows

2021 Chrysler Pacifica

The Chrysler Pacifica has been a longtime favorite of *MotorTrend*. Not only do we love the way it drives, but we also love the way it treats the family. In fact, two years ago we crowned it America's best family car after beating vehicles in several segments during our March Mayhem contest. For the 2021 model year, the Pacifica gets a decent midcycle upgrade, adding available all-wheel drive to the gas engine while keeping the magnificent Stow 'N Go seats.

The 3.6-liter V-6 Pentastar continues to make 287 hp and 262 lb-ft of torque; the nine-speed automatic can now send the power to all four wheels thanks to the new AWD system. Instead of using an "AWD Lock" button, the system looks at things such as temperature, the use of windshield wipers, and wheel slip before coming into action. In an impressive packaging lesson, Chrysler was able to keep the Stow 'N Go seats even with a

transmission tunnel for AWD. But unfortunately, the plug-in hybrid gets neither AWD nor Stow 'N Go due to the 16-kWh battery under the floor. The hybrid, however, continues to deliver more than 30 miles of electric range. In the battle of who can offer the best of both worlds, the Sienna is the only minivan to offer a hybrid powertrain and AWD together.

Besides being more capable, the 2021 Pacifica also uses new interior noise-reduction measures such as enhanced body sealing, thicker glass in the sliding doors, and acoustic glass for the windshield and front windows. As a result, the Pacifica's cabin should bring peace to parents after dropping off the kiddos at school. "It feels like a quality car that'll be able to withstand years of abuse from the family," features editor Christian Seabaugh said.

Keeping kids busy and entertained can be a hard task for any parent these days, but the Pacifica ups its game. With six



standard USB ports, an optional rear entertainment package, and 4G LTE Wi-Fi, kids will be able to stream Netflix all day long. Depending on the combination of packages and trims, the Pacifica can have up to a dozen USB ports, which should be more than enough to keep everyone on board connected.

Speaking of connectivity, parents will be extremely happy when they see their kids through the infotainment screen. The new FamCam feature takes a page from the Honda Odyssey and displays a bird's-eye view of the second and third rows. Double tap a seat, and the camera



zooms in to provide a closer look. "FamCam is a tiger mom's dream," associate road test editor Erick Ayapana said; senior features editor Jonny Lieberman described it as "absolutely killer."

But the Pacifica has some misses, too. The higher floor has tall passengers riding in the second and third rows with their knees uncomfortably high. The new Ultra center console on the Pinnacle trim increases its space, but it's not as generous as the Sienna's cavernous bridge console, which allows big purses to fit with no problem. And although a built-in vacuum is always nice to have, it lacks the power to pick up the crumbs the kids leave behind. The range-topping Pinnacle trim gives a great first impression, but when you look further, the fake wood and hard plastics are evident.

The Pacifica is still the gold standard of minivans, but we were hoping its midcycle update would deliver a more extensive list of improvements. **Miguel Cortina**

THE PACIFICA UPS ITS GAME TO KEEP KIDS ENTERTAINED.



SPECS	2021 Chrysler Pacifica S Limited AWD	2021 Chrysler Pacifica Hybrid Pinnacle
Base Price/As Tested	\$50,180/\$55,265	\$52,340/\$52,340
Power (SAE net)	287 hp @ 6,400 rpm	220 hp @ 5,050 rpm (gas) + 84- and 114-hp electric motors; 260 hp (comb)
Torque (SAE net)	262 lb-ft @ 4,000 rpm	235 lb-ft @ 3,700 rpm (gas) + 92- and 231-lb-ft electric motors; 262 lb-ft (comb, est)
Accel, 0-60 mph	8.3 sec	7.9 sec
Quarter Mile	16.3 sec @ 86.4 mph	16.1 sec @ 88.0 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	130 ft	122 ft
Lateral Acceleration	0.77 g (avg)	0.78 g (avg)
MT Figure Eight	28.1 sec @ 0.58 g (avg)	27.8 sec @ 0.61 g (avg)
EPA City/Hwy/Comb	17/25/20 mpg (est)	29/30/30 mpg (gas); 87/76/82 mpg-e (gas+elec)*



S LIMITED; HYBRID VEHICLE LAYOUT Front-engine, AWD; FWD, 7-pass, 4-door van **ENGINE/TRANSMISSION** 3.6L DOHC 24-valve V-6/9-speed auto; 3.6L Atkinson-cycle DOHC 24-valve V-6/Cont variable auto **CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)** 4,927 lb (56/44%); 5,119 lb (55/45%) **WHEELBASE** 121.6 in **L x W x H** 204.3 x 79.6 x 70.7; 699 in **ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY** 198/135; 39-116/44-112* kWh/100 miles **CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB** 0.98; 0.24-0.66* lb/mile

COTY

Contenders

PRO Great back seat • luxe features • cool interior details **CON** Engine refinement issues • subpar ride/handling • quicker/more efficient competition

2021 Genesis G80

We really wanted to love the 2021 Genesis G80, but the midsize luxury sedan segment requires a delicate touch the redesigned model just doesn't deliver. Genesis has nailed certain aspects while leaving us cold in others.

The most basic compliment we can pay the G80 is thanking Genesis for continuing to offer a sedan in this price range. While Genesis was putting final touches on the G80, the Acura RLX, Lexus GS, and Lincoln Continental were discontinued, leaving the sedan world three cars the poorer.

You don't get a prize just for showing up, though. Genesis attempts to earn its place among more established midsize luxury sedans with a bolder swagger outside and rich detailing inside. As with the GV80 SUV, the G80 gives off a high-tech, high-luxury first impression. From beveled-edge silver trim to the gearshift disc and the wood trim, there's no mistaking the G80 for anything but a luxury car.

The rear seat impresses, too, and not just for the way

the outboard seats cradle passengers. "The back seat is capacious, with a padded, fold-up armrest that also has room for your stuff, seat heater controls, and cupholders," editor-in-chief Mark Rechtein said. "Plus, there's a pass-through for long, skinny items. Truly magnificent, smart rear-seat design."

We also appreciate the G80 2.5T's rise in fuel economy compared to the last gen's standard 3.8-liter V-6. Look to the 2021 G80's 3.5-liter twin-turbo V-6, and you'll find an engine that propels the luxury sedan to 60 mph in a respectable 5.2 seconds. Luxury sedans don't really need to accelerate more swiftly, but it's worth noting the equivalent Audi A6 and Mercedes E-Class are quicker and more efficient.

If it had a better ride and more refined engines, we might be writing a different story. Judges took issue with both the 300-hp turbo-four and the 375-hp twin-turbo V-6, finding they lacked the smoothness and refinement of others in the class. What kept the G80 from moving forward was



the car's subpar body control and suspension roughness.

"Driving it back to back with the E-Class, the G80's Comfort mode feels like the Sport mode in the E-Class," *MotorTrend en Español*'s Miguel Cortina said. "The ride is less settled and stiffer." Yet the firmer suspension doesn't result in handling on par with its German rivals.

"It feels as if it's up on its tiptoes," senior features editor Jonny Lieberman said. "Even going in a straight line at about 40–45 mph, you can feel the G80 dipping on its springs. If you're going to enter the E-Class/5 Series segment, at bare minimum you've got to have the same levels of chassis sophistication. This vehicle simply doesn't."

If it sounds like we're being a little hard on the G80, we



are. Because just look at what the luxury brand has already accomplished. Numerous Car and now SUV of the Year finalists, plus one winner.

So please iterate on this, Genesis. Oh, and while we have your attention, consider raising the nearly flat infotainment rotary controller. "The infotainment screen is sharp and clear," associate road test editor Erick Ayapana said. "I somewhat got the hang of the rotary control knob, which feels high quality, but I still prefer BMW's iDrive."

The G80 will prove alluring to the luxury customer who wonders why some midsize luxury sedans don't feel midsize from the back seat. They might be impressed by the car's interior, too, or the features-per-dollar value. Just like the GV80, the G80 is recommendable to the right buyer. With better ride quality and body control, it might one day cause the top players in the segment to sweat a little more.

Zach Gale

THE G80 HAS A BOLD SWAGGER AND RICH INTERIOR DETAILS.



2.5T

SPECS	2021 Genesis G80 AWD (2.5T)	2021 Genesis G80 AWD 3.5T
Base Price/As Tested	\$51,875/\$60,575	\$63,275/\$69,075
Power (SAE net)	300 hp @ 5,800 rpm	375 hp @ 5,800 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	311 lb-ft @ 1,650 rpm	391 lb-ft @ 1,300 rpm
Accel, 0-60 mph	5.9 sec	5.2 sec
Quarter Mile	14.3 sec @ 97.2 mph	13.7 sec @ 103.8 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	116 ft	124 ft
Lateral Acceleration	0.87 g (avg)	0.84 g (avg)
MT Figure Eight	26.2 sec @ 0.68 g (avg)	25.9 sec @ 0.71 g (avg)
EPA City/Hwy/Comb	20/30/25 mpg	18/26/21 mpg

2.5T; 3.5T VEHICLE LAYOUT Front-engine, AWD, 5-pass, 4-door sedan **ENGINE/TRANSMISSION** 2.5L turbo DOHC 16-valve I-4; 3.5L twin-turbo DOHC 24-valve V-6/8-speed automatic **CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)** 4,230 lb (52/48%); 4,462 lb (53/47%) **WHEELBASE** 118.5 in **LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT** 196.7 x 75.0 x 57.7 in **ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY/COMB** 169/112; 187/130 kWh/100 miles **CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB** 0.82; 0.93 lb/mile





PRO Killer wheels • plush and comfy • great value **CON** Dated interior • missing gravitas • underwhelming V-8

2020 Genesis G90

It wasn't all that long ago that a big sedan like the 2020 Genesis G90 would be considered the flagship vehicle for a luxury brand. As consumer tastes have changed, the big three European luxury automakers' flagships—the Audi A8, BMW 7 Series, and Mercedes-Benz S-Class—have all been joined by equally opulent flagship SUVs—the Audi Q8, BMW X7, and Mercedes-Benz G-Class and GLS-Class. But in the upstart Genesis lineup, the G90 stands alone as the king of the castle.

It's a convincing executive sedan. "A Korean domestic-market limousine," editor-in-chief Mark Rechtein said while damning with faint praise: "This is what an elite luxury car would look and feel like, circa 2006."

The big, brooding G90 is the recipient of one of the most extensive midcycle updates we've seen in years. Its engines, a 365-hp 3.3-liter twin-turbo V-6 and an optional 420-hp 5.0-liter V-8, haven't been touched, but just about every panel, save for the doors and roof, has been

tweaked, tucked, and trimmed to bring the G90's styling in line with the new G80 sedan, GV80 SUV, and revised 2022 G70.

We were fans of the G90's new duds, judging this to be a more successful overall exterior design than that of its little brother, the G80. The G90's 19-inch wheels in particular drew praise—not just for how well they filled out the wheelwells but also for how stellar these '90s-throwback dish-and-spoke wheels look.

We only wish the G90's interior were as loved as its sheetmetal. "For a midcycle refresh, this is a good one outside, but I wish that trend continued inside," *MotorTrend en Español* managing editor Miguel Cortina said. "It's not that the interior looks bad, but I feel like all the energy and resources were spent outside and the interior was left untouched, especially when you compare the flagship G90 to the new interiors in the G80 and GV80."

With its analog gauges, Hyundai switchgear, and a dated (not to mention buggy)



infotainment suite, most judges felt that the G90's cabin was missing a few of the finer details and ornamentation needed to make a flagship luxury sedan truly stand out. A word of advice—a truly new G90 with the G80's jewelry would be killer.

As far as the drive experience goes, it hasn't changed at all since the G90 first made its debut in 2015. Both the G90 3.3 and 5.0 drive remarkably similarly despite having two wildly different powerplants. Both V-6 and V-8 are quiet, punchy, and smooth, preferring to rely on an elegant surge of low-end torque rather than brute horsepower to get the G90s moving down the road with authority. The ride is floaty and



unperturbed. "You really do get the impression that you're driving a massive limousine," senior features editor Jonny Lieberman said. "It actually feels a bit like a Toyota Century."

Interestingly enough, the cheaper G90 3.3 is both quicker in our instrumented testing and more efficient than the pricier G90 5.0, leaving some judges to question why Genesis even offers the naturally aspirated V-8.

Although the G90 aims to challenge the European luxury flagships, it does a more convincing job of filling the gap in the market ceded by big, comfy luxury sedans like the Lincoln Town Car. As the Lexus LS 500 and other big sedans chase dynamics at the expense of comfort, there's a big white space left in the market for Genesis to slip in. As Buyer's Guide director Zach Gale said, "When you're done pretending you want a sporty car, the G90 is ready to welcome anyone who knows what a Genesis is." **Christian Seabaugh**

THE GENESIS G90 IS A CONVINCING EXECUTIVE SEDAN.



5.0



SPECS	2020 Genesis G90 3.3T	2020 Genesis G90 5.0
Base Price/As Tested	\$73,225/\$73,225	\$76,725/\$76,725
Power (SAE net)	365 hp @ 6,000 rpm	420 hp @ 6,000 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	376 lb-ft @ 1,400 rpm	383 lb-ft @ 5,000 rpm
Accel, 0-60 mph	5.1 sec	5.4 sec
Quarter Mile	13.7 sec @ 103.7 mph	13.9 sec @ 103.1 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	122 ft	122 ft
Lateral Acceleration	0.84 g (avg)	0.83 g (avg)
MT Figure Eight	26.4 sec @ 0.69 g (avg)	26.9 sec @ 0.67 g (avg)
EPA City/Hwy/Comb	17/25/20 mpg	16/24/19 mpg

3.3T; 5.0 VEHICLE LAYOUT Front-engine, RWD, 5-pass, 4-door sedan **ENGINE/TRANSMISSION** 3.3L twin-turbo DOHC 24-valve V-6; 5.0L DOHC 32-valve V-8/8-speed automatic **CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)** 4,698 lb (51/49%); 4,812 lb (51/49%) **WHEELBASE** 124.4 in **LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT** 204.9 x 75.4 x 58.9 in **ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY** 198/135; 211/140 kWh/100 miles **CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB** 0.98; 1.03 lb/mile

COTY

Contenders



PRO Value • optional 290-hp engine • refined interior **CON** Missing Smart Park and other key tech • no free maintenance • still can't beat Honda

2021 Kia K5

The 2021 Kia K5 is trying to impress. This midsize sedan replaced the Optima in North America and adopted sportier styling than the outgoing model. The Optima wasn't really known for its dynamic feeling or styling—it was a nice sedan that didn't impress or disappoint.

With the K5, however, Kia seeks to change that. With an all-turbo lineup, available all-wheel drive, and a spacious cabin, the K5 is already generating some buzz in the still-crowded midsize sedan segment.

Whether you like it or hate it, the K5 can easily be spotted in a crowded parking lot. The front end gets a new iteration of Kia's "tiger nose" grille and adds fake air vents plus the Z-shaped daytime running lights. The rear is more mature, as it adopts dual exhaust tubes and taillights that connect via a thin LED strip.

The flashier exterior made an impact on our judges—some welcomed the new styling direction, but testing director Kim

Reynolds described it as "more alien than interesting."

Sharing its platform and powertrains with the Hyundai Sonata, the K5 has a 1.6-liter turbo-four base engine with 180 hp and 195 lb-ft of torque. The optional 2.5-liter turbo-four is only available in the GT model, where it produces 290 hp and 311 lb-ft. With that power, the K5 GT is much punchier than the Honda Accord 2.0T and delivers more torque than the Toyota Camry V-6. Naturally, the 2.5-liter became the favorite among judges, as it was fun to drive and handled well on the figure-eight test (though its sport suspension delivered a stiff ride). We were especially thankful that Hyundai and Kia are still differentiating their platform-sharing cousins in the sedan segment at a time when many automakers are dropping out altogether.

With the Hyundai Sonata also participating in this year's competition, judges tried to find the differences between both



(besides the sheetmetal). "There was a spell when their products were very different from one another, but after getting out of the Sonata N-Line and into the K5 GT, the lines are increasingly blurred," features editor Christian Seabaugh said.

Although the Kia K5 and Hyundai Sonata drive similarly to each other, the differences were more notable inside. Our top-of-the-line K5 EX came with heated and ventilated front seats, a heated steering wheel, a 10.3-inch touchscreen with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, and a panoramic sunroof. When compared to the Sonata SEL Plus, which is a trim below the fancy Sonata Limited, the K5 EX misses some important features, such



as a full digital instrument cluster and the ability to use your smartphone as a key. The "Smaht Pahk" feature that made the Sonata a star during the Super Bowl is also not available in the K5. But with a \$32,355 price tag, our K5 EX gives a lot of bang for the buck.

We had mixed opinions when it came to the interior styling. Some judges preferred the K5 and its traditional shifter, but others liked the Sonata's airy cabin, a result of its compact button shifter. "As much as I like the fake wood trim and the different dash, I don't think the K5's styling will age well," Buyer's Guide director Zach Gale said. Editor-in-chief Mark Rechtein, however, preferred the K5's driver-oriented center console: "Everything is within easy reach."

Although the K5 brings significant changes to Kia's midsize sedan, it wasn't enough to move the needle for our editors. And even though it stands out among the competition in terms of design and optional powertrains, it continues to be overshadowed by the Accord (and perhaps even the Sonata). **Miguel Cortina**

WITH AN ALL-TURBO LINEUP, THE KIA K5 IS MAKING SOME BUZZ IN THE STILL-CROWDED MIDSIZE SEDAN SEGMENT.



EX

SPECS	2021 Kia K5 EX	2021 Kia K5 GT
Base Price/As Tested	\$28,955/\$32,355	\$31,455/\$35,455
Power (SAE net)	180 hp @ 5,500 rpm	290 hp @ 5,800 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	195 lb-ft @ 1,500 rpm	311 lb-ft @ 1,650 rpm
Accel, 0-60 mph	7.8 sec	5.4 sec
Quarter Mile	16.0 sec @ 87.4 mph	14.0 sec @ 101.8 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	124 ft	127 ft
Lateral Acceleration	0.83 g (avg)	0.85 g (avg)
MT Figure Eight	27.4 sec @ 0.62 g (avg)	26.3 sec @ 0.69 g (avg)
EPA City/Hwy/Comb	27/37/31 mpg	26/35/29 mpg (est)



EX; GT VEHICLE LAYOUT Front-engine, FWD, 5-pass, 4-door sedan **ENGINE/TRANSMISSION** 1.6L turbo DOHC 16-valve I-4/8-speed automatic; 2.5L turbo DOHC 16-valve I-4/8-speed twin-clutch auto **CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)** 3,259 lb (61/39%); 3,527 lb (61/39%) **WHEELBASE** 112.2 in **LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT** 193.1 x 73.2 x 56.9 in **ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY** 125/91; 130/96 (est) kWh/100 miles **CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB** 0.63; 0.66 (est) lb/mile



PRO Cool four-spoke wheels • affordable for an EV • fun to drive (until it overheats) **CON** Poor range • inefficient motor • loud cabin

2020 Mini Cooper Electric

The 2020 Mini Cooper Electric is a time machine in a lot of ways. Open the driver-side door, slip into the Chesterfield Grey leather buckets, and finger the bright yellow toggle switch at the base of the center stack, and you, like me, might immediately be transferred back to our 2012 Car of the Year program, the first year an electric car competed in our 72-year-old program.

Two electric cars competed for the Golden Calipers that year—the Mitsubishi i-MiEV and the Nissan Leaf. The former was little more than a highway-legal electrified golf cart with 62 miles of range and an EPA rating of 112 mpg-e combined. The latter was a Car of the Year finalist but didn't win because despite its 99 mpg-e EPA score, we were worried about its paltry 73 miles of range.

We likely would have been impressed with the Mini Cooper Electric back in 2012. Built on BMW's UKL platform, which underpins all Minis and the BMW X1, X2, and 2 Series Gran Coupe,

the electric Mini ditches its 189-hp 2.0-liter turbo-four in favor of an electric motor making a modest 181 hp and 199 lb-ft of torque. In back, the gas tank gets replaced by a 33-kWh battery. Were it powered by internal combustion, that would be just shy of the equivalent of 1 gallon of gas. The EPA rates it at 108 mpg-e and 110 miles of range.

That would've blown us away eight years ago. But in these United States in 2020, it's a nonstarter.

"A range of 110 miles is inexcusable," *MotorTrend en Español* managing editor Miguel Cortina said. "Maybe it works if you're in Madrid or Paris where the streets are tight, parking is a problem, and distances are short, but then you look at the rest of the EV market. The Hyundai Kona Electric or Chevrolet Bolt makes a stronger case with over 250 miles of range."

Even if we shrink the Mini Electric's competitive set with some mental gymnastics to other



low-range EVs like the related BMW i3, Hyundai Ioniq Electric, and Nissan Leaf, the Mini's range still falls short by 39 miles to the small-battery Leaf and 60 miles to the Ioniq. Range isn't everything when it comes to most modern EVs, but that's because the table stakes for a decent EV is more like 250 miles.

"OK, we get it—the Mini can't make the drive from one tip of Long Island to the other, move along," you're saying. Fine. The Mini does make up a little ground against the criteria in value. At just over \$30,000 to start, the Mini undercuts a base-model Nissan Leaf by a couple grand.



The electric Mini is even somewhat fun to drive, with quick, light, city-friendly steering and good power delivery until the motor inevitably overheats and cuts power—as happened for quite a few judges. With the extra weight of a battery pack necessitating some suspension changes, the Mini's ride is just on the wrong side of flinty on the pockmarked streets of our evaluation loop. Its eco-friendly tires grip well but do transmit a fair bit of noise into the cabin.

Design is also a strong suit for the Mini. Its sheetmetal hasn't changed much since the third-generation Mini Hardtop made its debut in 2013, but the Cooper Electric's four-spoke wheels and bright yellow accents inject a dose of personality into a segment largely lacking in it. Unfortunately for all of us, it just doesn't bring much more than that to the table.

Christian Seabaugh



SPECS	2020 Mini Cooper SE
Base Price/As Tested	\$30,750/\$37,750
Power (SAE net)	181 hp
Torque (SAE net)	199 lb-ft @ 0 rpm
Accel, 0-60 mph	6.0 sec
Quarter Mile	14.7 sec @ 91.7 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	119 ft
Lateral Acceleration	0.80 g (avg)
MT Figure Eight	26.9 sec @ 0.64 g (avg)
EPA City/Hwy/Comb	115/100/108 mpg-e



VEHICLE LAYOUT Front-motor, FWD, 4-pass, 2-door hatchback **MOTOR/TRANSMISSION** Permanent-magnet electric motor/1-speed automatic
CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST) 3,085 lb (58/42%) **WHEELBASE** 98.2 in **LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT** 151.4 x 68.0 x 56.4 in
ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY 29/34 kWh/100 miles **CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB** 0.00 lb/mile (at vehicle)

Contenders



PRO Neat use of recycled interior materials • powerful • easy-to-use infotainment **CON** Crashy ride • terminal understeer • lots of Volvo parts

2021 Polestar 2

It's not easy launching a new brand, but by all accounts Polestar is off to a good start. The new EV brand jointly owned by Geely and Volvo launched its first vehicle, the plug-in hybrid Polestar 1, late last year. Although it's a fantastic vehicle—both as an engineering exercise and as a grand tourer—the Polestar 1 is expensive and limited to just 1,500 examples over a three-year run.

Enter the Tesla-fighting 2021 Polestar 2, the brand's first truly relevant vehicle—the introduction most folks will get to the new Sino-Swedish company.

You'd be forgiven for thinking the 2, Polestar's first full-electric vehicle, looks more like a Volvo than a car with a unique Polestar identity. Like the Polestar 1, the Polestar 2's styling is cribbed from an older Volvo concept—in this case the Volvo Concept 40.2, which made its debut back in 2016 alongside what would become the Volvo XC40.

The resulting Polestar looks a lot like an electrified S40 Cross

Country, were Volvo to build one. The cramped, pillboxlike interior is also a familiar mishmash of Volvo styling cues, except with a new easy-to-use Android-based infotainment suite. For true Earth Firsters, there's a plethora of recycled and vegan materials.

The 2's styling split our staff's sensibilities, but all agreed that they'd prefer Polestar develop its own styling cues instead of copying from Volvo's homework. It seems like we'll have to wait for either the Polestar 3 SUV or the Polestar 4 sports car for that.

More Volvo hardware sits underneath the Polestar 2's skin. Riding on the company's modular CMA platform, which underpins the gas and related electric versions of the XC40, the Polestar 2 sports a fairly unique battery arrangement. Its 75-kWh battery pack is laid out underneath both the front and rear seats and also stacked into the center console and through what would be a transmission tunnel on a gas or diesel-powered car.



As of now, all Polestar 2s are equipped with front and rear motors with a total system output of 402 hp and 487 lb-ft of torque. Due to the permanent-magnet nature of the motors—meaning they must always be driven and can't freewheel—the Polestar 2's range pales in comparison to the rival Tesla Model 3, which nets 141 mpg-e combined and 250 miles of range on the EPA cycle to the Polestar's 92 mpg-e and 233 miles of range. And for 2021, Tesla is promising 263 miles of range on a base Model 3.

Although most EVs have trouble competing with Tesla on range, most can at least hang with it

when it comes to the drive experience. Despite Polestar's origins as a Volvo racing team, the 2 disappointingly can't. It's not that the Polestar 2 isn't quick—blistering straight-line performance is a cheap trick when it comes to EVs—it's that when you ask the 2 to do more than zip quickly away from the line, it starts to falter.

The Polestar's ride is the biggest offender. Sitting on Öhlins dampers (manually adjustable, though you need to reach under the car to adjust the fronts and slide your hand behind a splash shield to change the rears), the 2 has trouble managing the weight of its heavy steel construction (not to mention battery pack) as it crashes and heaves over bumps. "It feels like the Polestar is riding on pogo sticks," associate road test editor Erick Ayapana said.

A stiff ride would be forgiven if there were some kind of handling trade-off, but there isn't one there, either. The overarching Polestar 2 drive experience is more that of a stiffly sprung SUV than a luxury sport compact. Testing director Kim Reynolds noted that the 2 "understeers more than I'd like; you have to be careful to be very polite with the right foot, or it will abruptly understeer wide."

The exceptional Polestar 1 had our hopes set high for the 2, but unfortunately it doesn't measure up just yet. **Christian Seabaugh**

YOU'D BE FORGIVEN FOR THINKING THE 2 LOOKS LIKE A VOLVO.



SPECS	2021 Polestar 2 (Launch Edition)
Base Price/As Tested	\$61,200/\$68,400
Power (SAE net)	402 hp (front/rear comb)
Torque (SAE net)	487 lb-ft @ 0 rpm (front/rear comb)
Accel, 0–60 mph	4.0 sec
Quarter Mile	12.6 sec @ 110.0 mph
Braking, 60–0 mph	103 ft
Lateral Acceleration	0.92 g (avg)
MT Figure Eight	24.7 sec @ 0.79 g (avg)
EPA City/Hwy/Comb	96/88/92 mpg-e



VEHICLE LAYOUT Front/rear-motor, AWD, 5-pass, 4-door hatchback **MOTORS/TRANSMISSION** front/rear permanent-magnet electric motors/1-speed automatic **CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)** 4,693 lb (51/49%) **WHEELBASE** 107.7 in **LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT** 181.3 x 71.2 x 58.0 in **ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY** 35/38 kWh/100 miles **CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB** 0.00 lb/mile (at vehicle)

PRO Sliding second-row seats • hybrid fuel efficiency • spacious cabin **CON** Wacky styling • small side windows • outdated infotainment system

2021 Toyota Sienna

More than a decade after Toyota's third-generation minivan made its debut, the 2021 Sienna arrives with a modern cabin, hybrid-only powertrain, and more comfort and convenience items. Based on Toyota's TNGA-K platform, which it shares with the RAV4, Highlander, and Venza, the Sienna aims to please families with its cool features, spacious center console, and lower floor, the latter making it easy for kids and grandparents to climb in.

But first, you have to get past its new exterior styling. Purportedly inspired by Japan's Shinkansen bullet train, the Sienna is both flashy and wacky. Its huge grille and sculpted lines on the front continue to the profile, where the muscular wheel flares give it an SUV-esque appearance. If the rear looks like the Supra, it's not by mistake—Toyota designers wanted to give the Sienna a sporty look.

The cabin is more compelling, however. Judges appreciated its

new look—especially the ample center console and the long, spacious tray that runs along the dash. The tray is perfect to hold keys, wallets, or phones, and it's within easy reach for the driver or front passenger. The innovative "bridge" center console allows occupants to place large items under it while making it easy to access from either side.

"Parents up front will love the big storage shelf built into the dash, the multitude of cupholders, and the big bridged storage area," features editor Christian Seabaugh said.

With the Super Long Slide seats (standard in the Platinum and Limited), the second-row captain's chairs can slide back up to 25 inches, and with the built-in ottoman, occupants will feel like they are in an executive jet.

Unfortunately, access to the third row is not as convenient between the captain's chairs, given the long center console. Once you make it all the way back, the small side



windows make the experience claustrophobic. Unlike in the Chrysler Pacifica, which offers a powered retractable third row, you'll have to put your muscles to work to make the seats disappear in the Sienna.

In a big change from the previous generation, the Sienna ditches its V-6 in favor of a hybrid powertrain producing 243 hp, 53 less than the outgoing minivan. But what price fuel economy?

"The more I drive the Sienna, the more it feels like a big Prius to me," senior features editor Jonny Lieberman said. "And I mean that in a bad way. The Prius, while extremely efficient, sacrificed



everything else on the altar of efficiency."

The Sienna delivers 36 mpg—that's 15 mpg better than the 2020 Sienna and 6 mpg more than the Pacifica Hybrid in gas-only mode. Another Toyota advantage: offering all-wheel drive with its hybrid engine, something the Chrysler doesn't.

But the Toyota's thrashy engine note and unsettling ride disappointed our judges. "The suspension feels burdened and responds poorly to big road impacts," editor-in-chief Mark Rechtein said.

The new Sienna is a big improvement over the previous minivan. Then again, Toyota engineers had lots of time to improve on its swagger wagon. Families will welcome the updated tech and will enjoy the fancy new features. But a better ride and smoother acceleration should be included in its midcycle refresh. **Miguel Cortina**

THE SIENNA DITCHES ITS V-6 FOR A HYBRID POWERTRAIN.



SPECS	2021 Toyota Sienna Hybrid Platinum
Base Price/As Tested	\$51,075/\$51,575
Power (SAE net)	189 hp @ 6,000 rpm (gas) + 180 hp (elec); 245 hp (comb)
Torque (SAE net)	176 lb-ft @ 4,400 rpm (gas) + 199 lb-ft (elec)
Accel, 0-60 mph	7.9 sec
Quarter Mile	16.1 sec @ 88.3 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	131 ft
Lateral Acceleration	0.75 g (avg)
MT Figure Eight	28.3 sec @ 0.59 g (avg)
EPA City/Hwy/Comb	36/36/36 mpg (est)



VEHICLE LAYOUT Front-engine, FWD, 7-pass, 4-door van **ENGINE/TRANSMISSION** 2.5L Atkinson-cycle DOHC 16-valve I-4/Cont variable auto
CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST) 4,714 lb (55/45%) **WHEELBASE** 120.5 in **LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT** 203.5 x 78.5 x 68.5 in
ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY 94/94 kWh/100 miles **CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB** 0.54 lb/mile

Finalists



PRO Gorgeous styling • strong inline-six • four-door practicality **CON** Pricey • unrefined stop/start system • cramped rear headroom

2020 BMW 8 Series Gran Coupe

The new BMW 8 Series Gran Coupe won't set any sales charts ablaze, but based on our judges' notes, it might be the most desirable car in the automaker's lineup. And why wouldn't it be?

Yes, it's a sedan version of the very attractive BMW 8 Series coupe, but it manages to be just as gorgeous. The coupe's most standout styling details—its wide haunches, frameless doors, and long hood—have translated well into the Gran Coupe. And the practicality of its rear doors is just icing on the cake.

"The proportions are just stellar," senior features editor Jonny Lieberman said. "Just how you drew up cars on your Pee-Chee folders in high school when you dreamed of being a designer."

We opted to take only one 8 Series variant to this year's competition; we went with the base 840i xDrive Gran Coupe powered by a turbocharged inline-six. The M850i and M8 round out the lineup (both powered by

twin-turbo V-8s), but we decided to go with the one that won't completely bust your wallet.

"In terms of engineering excellence, the 840i excels," Lieberman said. "Few six-cylinders are as good as what the Bavarian motor company produces. This has been true historically, and it continues to be true in the present day."

And despite its big footprint and heft (4,284 pounds), most judges agreed it was a joy behind the wheel. Testing director Kim Reynolds called it a "sweetheart" around the figure-eight course thanks to its accurate steering and linear power delivery. On the open road, the Gran Coupe drives like the legendary firm, propulsive 7 Series autobahn chargers of yore, but with a modern feel.

A majority of the judges were just as smitten with the interior, which coddles passengers in a reassuringly luxuriant, structured cocoon. Rear passenger room is relatively spacious, with seats just as comfy as the fronts. The two-tone black and red leather not only looked expensive but



also felt soft and supple. Reynolds appreciated the care designers took to integrate the infotainment screen with the dashboard.

"It delivers the feeling of accomplishment every time you get in it," editor-in-chief Mark Rechtein said. "Everything is an extra layer of supple elegance and enjoyment." This might be a generational thing, but our younger evaluators dissented, including *MotorTrend en Español*'s Miguel Cortina, who wished for more special touches (did you not see the crystal glass gear shifter?), and features editor Christian



Seabaugh, who got a "chunky and inelegant" vibe from the interior.

On the tech front, there were zero complaints about the iDrive infotainment interface, and most judges had few issues with the driver assistance features, including lane centering.

Nitpicks? The engine's stop/start system isn't quite as smooth and stealth as a Mercedes powered by its new mild hybrid inline-six, and taller judges were getting fairly close to the headliner while sitting in the rear seats. Then there's the price of entry, which is just slightly under \$89,000, making it significantly more expensive than the Mercedes-Benz CLS and Audi A7.

But as Buyer's Guide director Zach Gale points out: "In a fashion-forward luxury segment, is that really a bad thing? I'm not so sure." Buyers of the 8 Series will likely agree. **Erick Ayapana**

MOST JUDGES AGREED IT WAS A JOY BEHIND THE WHEEL.



SPECS	2020 BMW 840i xDrive Gran Coupe
Base Price/As Tested	\$88,795/\$100,025
Power (SAE net)	335 hp @ 5,000 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	368 lb-ft @ 1,600 rpm
Accel, 0-60 mph	4.4 sec
Quarter Mile	13.0 sec @ 104.9 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	114 ft
Lateral Acceleration	0.92 g (avg)
MT Figure Eight	25.1 sec @ 0.74 g (avg)
EPA City/Hwy/Comb	20/27/23 mpg



VEHICLE LAYOUT Front-engine, AWD, 5-pass, 4-door sedan ENGINE/TRANSMISSION 3.0L turbo DOHC 24-valve I-6/8-speed automatic CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST) 4,284 lb (52/48%) WHEELBASE 119.0 in LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT 200.2 x 76.1 x 55.2 in ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY 169/125 kWh/100 miles CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB 0.86 lb/mile

hybrid

PRO Good value • roomy back seats • fun N Line variant **CON** Unrefined transmission • fishy front-end styling • ride quality

2021 Hyundai Sonata

The Hyundai Sonata makes a compelling case to grab our Golden Calipers this year with bold styling and an expanded lineup, which includes a hybrid and a new N Line model powered by a peppy turbo-four engine. With consumers continuing to gravitate to crossovers, will the revived Sonata be enough to slow the trend? And can it rise above the Toyota Camry and Honda Accord?

The biggest surprise in the lineup is the N Line. Enthusiasts looking for a practical yet fun midsize sedan will likely find a lot to like with this one, including a

2.5-liter turbocharged I-4 making close to 300 hp. "This is quite a sporty sedan," *MotorTrend en Español* managing editor Miguel Cortina said. "The body likes to lean in nicely in the corners. It's engaging to drive." These were unexpected but welcomed impressions for a Sonata.

The fuel-sipping Sonata Hybrid is on the opposite end of the spectrum. Its EPA rating of 45/51 mpg city/highway is certainly impressive, but Buyer's Guide director Zach Gale pointed out that it could be better: "Although efficiency is great compared to the Sonata 1.6T, it is average compared to the Camry and



Accord." Those cars are rated 51/53 and 48/47 mpg, respectively. Gale also wished for a more refined powertrain, a complaint other judges echoed.

Judges also had the opportunity to evaluate the mass-market Sonata 1.6T. Our test car rang in at \$32,050 and earned high marks for value. LED headlights, a panoramic sunroof, and a 10.3-inch infotainment screen are just a few items in the long list of features. Owners get three years or 36,000 miles of complimentary maintenance, too.

Testing director Kim Reynolds was initially satisfied with the 1.6T's performance on the figure-eight course, where he said it was well behaved and "better controlled than you'd expect ... not another sloppy family car."

Out in the real world, however, judges were torn, especially



with the powertrain. Although Gale thought the 1.6T was plenty strong (with the front tires occasionally chattering under acceleration), some judges noted inconsistencies with the transmission, which features editor Christian Seabaugh said was "wildly uncooperative."

The Sonata was also criticized for ride quality at freeway speeds, where judges hoped for smoother body control. "The springs are too soft," senior features editor Jonny Lieberman said. "It doesn't handle normal road imperfections as well as the other finalists."

Then there's the sheetmetal. There's no arguing that a lot of effort was put into the design, and most judges seemed to like the rear end and striking taillights. But the grille struggled to garner any fans. "From every angle except the front, this is an attractive car," Gale said.

So although we liked the fun N Line and smooth hybrid, for the volume models that most customers will buy, it's difficult to overlook the Sonata's shortcomings. **Erick Ayapana**

BETTER THAN EXPECTED—NOT ANOTHER SLOPPY FAMILY CAR.



SPECS	2021 Hyundai Sonata 1.6T	2021 Hyundai Sonata N Line	2021 Hyundai Sonata Hybrid (Limited)
Base Price/As Tested	\$29,195/\$32,050	\$34,200/\$34,400 (est)	\$36,295/\$36,750
Power (SAE net)	180 hp @ 5,500 rpm	290 hp @ 5,800 rpm	150 hp @ 6,000 rpm (gas) + 51 hp (elec); 192 hp (comb)
Torque (SAE net)	195 lb-ft @ 1,500 rpm	311 lb-ft @ 1,650 rpm	139 lb-ft @ 5,000 rpm (gas) + 151 lb-ft (elec)
Accel, 0-60 mph	7.8 sec	5.3 sec	7.6 sec
Quarter Mile	16.0 sec @ 87.5 mph	13.9 sec @ 103.5 mph	15.8 sec @ 89.5 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	126 ft	110 ft	121 ft
Lateral Acceleration	0.85 g (avg)	0.88 g (avg)	0.83 g (avg)
MT Figure Eight	27.0 sec @ 0.64 g (avg)	25.8 sec @ 0.72 g (avg)	27.5 sec @ 0.62 g (avg)
EPA City/Hwy/Comb	27/37/30 mpg	26/35/29 mpg (est)	45/51/47 mpg

1.6T; N LINE; HYBRID VEHICLE LAYOUT Front-engine, FWD, 5-pass, 4-door sedan **ENGINE/TRANSMISSION** 1.6L turbo DOHC 16-valve I-4/8-speed automatic; 2.5L turbo DOHC 16-valve I-4/8-speed twin-clutch auto; 2.0L Atkinson-cycle DOHC 16-valve I-4/6-speed automatic

CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST) 3,322 lb (60/40%); 3,496 lb (62/38%); 3,445 lb (60/40%) **WHEELBASE** 111.8 in **LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT** 192.9 x 73.2 x 56.9 in **ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY** 125/91; 130/96; 75/66 kWh/100 miles **CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB** 0.63; 0.66; 0.41 lb/mile

Finalists

PRO Impressive base model • nightclub interior • AMG engine **CON** Melty exterior design • some cheap bits • rough ride

2020 Mercedes-Benz CLA

The democratization of luxury has proven difficult for many premium brands, none more so than Mercedes-Benz. Pilloried for its cynical first attempt at the entry-luxury CLA-Class subcompact sedan, the folks from Stuttgart could have packed it in. Instead, they doubled down, first with the A-Class (a 2020 COTY finalist) and then with the second-gen CLA, which is nothing short of impressive.

"The previous version always felt built to a price and like it had been finished by Mercedes' van division," features editor Christian Seabaugh said. "The new one is a properly appealing luxury subcompact."

Because *MotorTrend* Car of the Year is meant to evaluate the entire vehicle line, we tested both a well-equipped "base" CLA 250 and the angry-as-a-swarm-of-murder-hornets AMG CLA 45. Normally, the base model underwhelms after folks are wowed by the top trim. But in this case the standard CLA 250 was the one that surprised us the most.

"The CLA really gives you a warm welcome into the Mercedes family," *MotorTrend en Español*'s Miguel Cortina said. "It treats you like a Mercedes, drives like a Mercedes, and feels like a Mercedes. This is the way entry-level luxury cars should be. The interior is plush and warm, and it has that Mercedes look that is outstanding."

Intriguingly, the CLA shares underpinnings with the A-Class, as well as the GLA-Class and GLB-Class crossovers. Yet our judges were universal in pronouncing the CLA clearly superior to the rest of the quartet.

Granted, there are some faults: The dual-clutch transmission suffered jerky moments, especially when cold at startup, and not all dual-clutches do that. So some refinement is needed there.

Subcompacts will always be challenged in delivering a refined ride, but the CLA 250 (and obviously the CLA 45) induced clashing opinions as to whether it was harsher than its BMW M235i Gran Coupe competition.



Inside, Mercedes did its best to deliver luxury touches and premium materials for a budget-minded price. The buttons, dials, and stalks all feel appropriate and convincing to the three-pointed star. The seats are sufficiently comfortable, the full-digital display is impressive, and you get ambient lighting across the full spectrum of colors.

"Despite cheap materials here and there, I know what to expect when I get into a Mercedes, with these gorgeous air vents and the toggle switches that I can't operate unless I look down to see what each one does," Buyer's Guide director Zach Gale said.

The value equation is tricky: Our CLA 250 test model came across at



a breathy \$47,935. For that sort of cash, you can get a next-size-up Genesis G70 3.3 twin-turbo with far more power, a better ride, proper leather seats, more intuitive infotainment, and a far larger back seat. But it's not a Mercedes.

Then we climbed into the CLA 45. We'll just let Seabaugh riff here: "I apologize to the rush-hour crowd—this car encourages me to drive like an ass. It just does so much so well. It's well balanced and composed. Its steering is weighty but pure and accurate. Its engine is a nuclear bomb in a grenade form factor. Its transmission is quick-shifting, never caught out of sorts, and completely livable in stop-and-go traffic."

Yes, the AMG we tested came in well past \$70K, but you can scrap a slew of options, like the \$4,300 AMG Dynamic Plus package.

If there were a "most improved player" award, the CLA-Class would definitely be in contention.

Mark Rechtein

"THIS IS THE WAY ENTRY-LEVEL LUXURY CARS SHOULD BE."



SPECS	2020 Mercedes-Benz CLA 250 4Matic+	2020 Mercedes-AMG CLA 45 4Matic+
Base Price/As Tested	\$39,645/\$47,935	\$55,795/\$73,850
Power (SAE net)	221 hp @ 5,800 rpm	382 hp @ 6,500 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	258 lb-ft @ 1,800 rpm	354 lb-ft @ 4,750 rpm
Accel, 0-60 mph	6.0 sec	3.6 sec
Quarter Mile	14.5 sec @ 95.8 mph	12.1 sec @ 113.6 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	125 ft	109 ft
Lateral Acceleration	0.86 g (avg)	0.99 g (avg)
MT Figure Eight	26.5 sec @ 0.67 g (avg)	24.1 sec @ 0.80 g (avg)
EPA City/Hwy/Comb	23/33/27 mpg	20/29/23 mpg

250; 45 VEHICLE LAYOUT Front-engine, AWD, 5-pass, 4-door sedan **ENGINE/TRANSMISSION** 2.0L turbo DOHC 16-valve I-4/7-speed auto-clutch manual; 8-speed auto-clutch manual **CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)** 3,498 lb (60/40%); 3,724 lb (60/40%) **WHEELBASE** 107.4 in **LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT** 184.6 x 72.0 x 56.7 in; 184.8 x 75.6 x 55.4 in **ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY** 147/102; 169/116 kWh/100 miles **CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB** 0.73; 0.83 lb/mile



PRO Surprisingly stylish • standard safety tech • features per dollar **CON** Average fuel economy • poor retained value • lumpy CVT tuning

2020 Nissan Sentra

Nissan has done it. After years of econobox mediocrity, the Sentra matters again. Even without the head-turning two-tone paint of our test car, this Nissan can compete head-on with the Toyota Corolla and almost every other car in the segment.

True, this isn't a comparison test, but judges found it impossible not to consider the new-for-2020 Nissan Sentra against an aging but still excellent class leader.

"The Honda Civic looms large," senior features editor Jonny Lieberman said, "and in terms of engineering excellence, I don't think the Sentra has it beat."

Still, what an improvement. Like the Civic, the Sentra feels spacious and well designed. Associate road test editor Erick Ayapana said our \$26,055 test car "looks more expensive than it is inside and out," and editor-in-chief Mark Rechtein admitted to looking in his rearview mirror at the Sentra and mistaking it for a new Audi design language.

Outstanding features-per-dollar value makes the Sentra especially compelling. A full package of safety and convenience gear is standard on every Sentra, including automatic emergency braking, rear cross-traffic alert with braking (if you risk reversing from a parking spot into a moving car), and blind-spot monitoring. In the midlevel SV trim, the Sentra offers a ton of features for just over \$21,000, including hands-free keyless access, 16-inch alloy wheels, and an 8.0-inch touchscreen at the top of the dash with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

Against the popular Corolla, the Sentra has another advantage: one standard engine across the lineup. A couple judges found the Nissan's 149-hp 2.0-liter naturally aspirated engine a little coarse, but the powerplant delivers satisfactory acceleration that's far quicker than the Corolla's 1.8-liter standard engine. We're focusing more on the Corolla than the Civic because, well, the Sentra can't compete



with the Civic's more engaging driving dynamics. Even so, the Sentra delivers solid performance for drivers simply looking for a stylish appliance.

"It just seems like an honest car, no pretension," testing director Kim Reynolds said. "Its bones are good, and it moves in a pleasant way, rarely wrong-footed."

With decent tech, abundant features, and solid design, the Sentra's biggest issue is its continuously variable transmission. Don't tell anyone, but a couple *MotorTrend* editors actually like CVTs for the everyday commuting smoothness they provide, and we've lauded Honda's more recent CVTs. In the Nissan's case, however, it's a weakness.

"The CVT continues to wander under hard acceleration, surging and forcing pretend 'shift' points," Rechtein said. "It just sounds like you're losing power."

A few Sentra drivers might also notice the way the transmission tends to simulate unwanted shifts when coming to a stop. But hey, at least they'll experience that from comfortable seats—now a trait we expect from Nissans. Loaded Sentra SRs get a 360-degree camera system with a convenient camera button below the screen, making it easy to switch it on when you're trying to execute a parking job just right. An SV-specific Premium package adds diamond-quilted leather seats.

The Sentra's attempted pivot from "I need a car" to "I want that car" is only partially successful. Minor interior complaints: The cupholders have trouble keeping taller bottles in place, and the available power seats offer only six ways of adjustment (off the class standard of eight). Budget-conscious shoppers should be aware of IntelliChoice data showing that over the course of five years, the Sentra will retain far less of its value than a Civic or Corolla will. Plus, the Sentra offers merely average fuel economy and driving range.

Despite these minuses, this Sentra joins the Rogue and Kicks as a strong foundation the automaker can build on. **Zach Gale**

"IT JUST SEEMS LIKE AN HONEST CAR, NO PRETENSIONS."



SPECS	2020 Nissan Sentra (2.0 SR CVT)
Base Price/As Tested	\$22,575/\$26,055
Power (SAE net)	149 hp @ 6,400 rpm
Torque (SAE net)	146 lb-ft @ 4,400 rpm
Accel, 0-60 mph	8.8 sec
Quarter mile	16.8 sec @ 84.1 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	121 ft
Lateral Acceleration	0.85 g (avg)
MT Figure Eight	27.5 sec @ 0.61 g (avg)
EPA City/Hwy/Comb	28/37/32 mpg



VEHICLE LAYOUT Front-engine, FWD, 5-pass, 4-door sedan **ENGINE/TRANSMISSION** 2.0L DOHC 16-valve I-4/Cont variable auto
CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST) 3,122 lb (61/39%) **WHEELBASE** 106.8 in **LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT** 182.7 x 71.5 x 57.0 in
ENERGY CONS, CITY HWY/COMB 120/91 kWh/100 miles **CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB** 0.62 lb/mile

Finalists



For more information about these vehicles, check out our Buyer's Guide at motortrend.com/cars

PRO Weak-in-the-knees looks • phenomenal performance • drives like a Porsche should **CON** Inefficient • insufficient range • very pricey

2020 Porsche Taycan

The CliffsNotes summary of the electric Porsche Taycan is this: a staggeringly impressive vehicle that struggled against some of our Car of the Year criteria.

Remember, we employ six key criteria when evaluating cars during COTY, which is how the \$26,000 Nissan Sentra is able to be in the same competition with a \$146,000 electric Porsche. The Taycan knocked several of those criteria out of the park. But let's get the bad stuff out of the way first.

"You are looking at the least efficient fully electric vehicle currently produced today, period," Buyer's Guide director Zach Gale said. "How do you spin that?" You can't. The Taycan Turbo S gets 68 mpg-e, whereas a comparable Tesla Model S P100D achieves 98 mpg-e. Gale continued: "You shouldn't get a prize for just showing up." Harsh but accurate.

The same can be said for the Taycan's range, with the EPA rating the 4S model at 203 miles. That's bad. The Turbo S is rated at 192 miles. That's worse. Now, we know

the EPA range ratings are off—we achieved 254 miles twice in two tests—but even that result is 100 miles less than you'd get with that Tesla. Also, we all hate the shadeless glass roof. Now, on to the good stuff.

"What a special vehicle," *MotorTrend en Español*'s Miguel Cortina said. "It feels like a Porsche in every single way. It's engaging to drive, confidence-inspiring, and elegant." That's perhaps the sensation that struck all of us the hardest. Both Taycans felt like Porsches. Editor-in-chief Mark Rechtein explained it like this: "Despite all the corporate speak about 'Our DNA,' most electric vehicles don't feel anything like the automaker that built them. If anybody was trying to create a seamless transition from internal combustion to electric, Porsche has succeeded." As good as the 4S was to drive, the Turbo S was that much better. "What a silly, silly, wonderful car," features editor Christian Seabaugh said.

Looking at the Taycan against our remaining criteria, it could



be named Car of the Year just because of advancement in design. Have you ever seen a better-looking sedan? Sure, it's not quite as gorgeous as the Mission E concept unveiled at the 2015 Frankfurt auto show, but close enough. The front end perhaps has a touch of Lexus-itis, what with those black mascara drips flowing south from the headlights. But from the A-pillar back, the design is pure magic. Viewed from the rear, there's an alien ship motif, almost like a Cylon Raider from the *Battlestar Galactica* reboot. A few judges had some valid concerns about the functionality of the interior (world's worst rearview camera!), but none could deny the great design. Special props for the gold metal trim.



Then there's engineering excellence. Let's not confuse this with efficiency, though as Gale noted, they are intertwined. Fair, but we never hold ICE cars to this double standard. This is the first fully electric car I've ever driven that drifts, meaning not only does Porsche allow you to turn everything off (Hey, Tesla, we're staring at you), but Porsche's engineers also took the time to make the Taycan drive like an actual car. A huge, massive achievement. This bodes so well for the future of EVs; even hardened haters would be smitten with how the Taycan drives.

"What a fantastic car," Cortina said. "The acceleration, the handling, the steering—it all makes sense. It's the car I want to continue driving for hours. It's the one that gives you confidence at the wheel to keep going for more." So what if it's expensive and not very efficient? The Taycan's a Porsche, after all. **Jonny Lieberman**

THIS IS THE FIRST ELECTRIC CAR I'VE DRIVEN THAT DRIFTS.



TURBO S

SPECS	2020 Porsche Taycan 4S	2020 Porsche Taycan Turbo S
Base Price/As Tested	\$105,150/\$146,040	\$186,350/\$204,420
Power (SAE net)	562 hp (front/rear comb)	750 hp (front/rear comb)
Torque (SAE net)	479 lb-ft @ 0 rpm (front/rear comb)	774 lb-ft @ 0 rpm (front/rear comb)
Accel, 0-60 mph	3.4 sec	2.4 sec
Quarter Mile	11.6 sec @ 121.9 mph	10.3 sec @ 133.3 mph
Braking, 60-0 mph	107 ft	104 ft
Lateral Acceleration	1.03 g (avg)	0.98 g (avg)
MT Figure Eight	23.6 sec @ 0.84 g (avg)	23.6 sec @ 0.86 g (avg)
EPA City/Hwy/Comb	68/71/69 mpg-e	67/68/68 mpg-e



4S; TURBO S VEHICLE LAYOUT Front/rear-motor, AWD, 4-pass, 4-door sedan **MOTORS/TRANSMISSIONS** Front/rear permanent magnet electric motors/1-speed (front), 2-speed (rear) automatic **CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)** 5,116 lb (49/51%); 5,221 lb (49/51%) **WHEELBASE** 114.2 in **LENGTH x WIDTH x HEIGHT** 195.4 x 77.4 x 54.3 in **ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY** 50/47; 50/50 kWh/100 miles **CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB** 0.00 lb/mile (at vehicle)

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COTY | Finalists

POWERTRAIN/CHASSIS	2020 BMW 840i xDrive Gran Coupe	2020 Hyundai Sonata Hybrid (Limited)	2021 Hyundai Sonata 1.6T, 2021 Hyundai Sonata N Line
DRIVETRAIN LAYOUT	Front-engine, AWD	Front-engine, FWD	Front-engine, FWD
ENGINE TYPE	Turbocharged I-6, alum block/head	I-4, on-demand Atkinson cycle, alum block/head, plus permanent-magnet electric motor	Turbocharged I-4, alum block/head
VALVETRAIN	DOHC, 4 valves/cyl	DOHC, 4 valves/cyl	DOHC, 4 valves/cyl
DISPLACEMENT	182.9 cu in/2,998cc	122.0 cu in/1,999cc	97.5 cu in/1,598cc, 152.4 cu in/2,497cc
COMPRESSION RATIO	11.0:1	14.0:1	10.5: 1
POWER (SAE NET)	335 hp @ 5,000 rpm	150 hp @ 6,000 rpm (gas) + 51 hp (elec); 192 hp (comb)	180 hp @ 5,500 rpm, 290 hp @ 5,800 rpm
TORQUE (SAE NET)	368 lb-ft @ 1,600 rpm	139 lb-ft @ 5,000 rpm (gas) + 151 lb-ft (elec)	195 lb-ft @ 1,500 rpm, 311 lb-ft @ 1,650 rpm
REDLINE	6,500 rpm	Not indicated	6,500 rpm
WEIGHT TO POWER	12.8 lb/hp	17.9 lb/hp	18.5, 12.1 lb/hp
TRANSMISSION	8-speed automatic	6-speed automatic	8-speed automatic, 8-speed twin-clutch auto
AXLE/FINAL DRIVE RATIO	2.93:1/1.88:1	3.51:1/2.71:1	3.24:1/2.06:1, 4.08:1 (gears 1, 2 ,5, 6, R), 2.94:1 (gears 3, 4, 7, 8)/1.94:1
SUSPENSION, FRONT; REAR	Struts, coil springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar	Struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar	Struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar
STEERING RATIO	16.3:1	13.3:1	13.3:1, 12.4:1
TURNS LOCK TO LOCK	2.1	2.6	2.7, 2.5
BRAKES, F; R	15.5-in vented disc; 15.7-in vented disc, ABS	12.0-in vented disc; 11.2-in disc, ABS	12.8-in vented disc; 11.8-in disc, 13.6-in vented disc; 12.8-in disc, ABS
WHEELS, F;R	8.0 x 20-in; 9.0 x 20-in cast aluminum	7.0 x 17-in cast aluminum	8.0 x 19-in cast aluminum
TIRES, F;R	245/35R20 95Y; 275/30R20 97Y Michelin Pilot Sport 3 ZP	215/55R17 94V Michelin Primacy A/S (M+S)	245/40R19 94W Pirelli P Zero All Season (M+S), 245/40R19 98Y Continental Premium Contact 6
DIMENSIONS			
WHEELBASE	119.0 in	111.8 in	111.8 in
TRACK, F/R	64.1/65.8 in	64.6/64.2 in	63.4/63.7 in
LENGTH X WIDTH X HEIGHT	200.2 x 76.1 x 55.2 in	192.9 x 73.2 x 56.9 in	192.9 x 73.2 x 56.9 in
TURNING CIRCLE	40.4 ft	36.1 ft	35.9 ft
CURB WEIGHT	4,284 lb	3,445 lb	3,322, 3,496 lb
WEIGHT DIST, F/R	52/48%	60/40%	60/40%, 62/38%
SEATING CAPACITY	5	5	5
HEADROOM, F/R	39.1/37.0 in	40.0/37.8 in	40.0/38.4 in
LEGROOM, F/R	42.1/36.6 in	46.1/34.8 in	46.1/34.8 in
SHOULDER ROOM, F/R	57.2/54.6 in	57.9/56.1 in	57.9/56.1 in
CARGO VOLUME	15.5 cu ft	16.0 cu ft	16.0 cu ft
TEST DATA			
ACCELERATION TO MPH			
0-30	1.5 sec	2.6 sec	2.8, 2.2 sec
0-40	2.3	3.8	4.1, 3.1
0-50	3.2	5.7	5.8, 4.1
0-60	4.4	7.6	7.8, 5.3
0-70	5.8	9.8	10.1, 6.8
0-80	7.4	12.6	13.2, 8.5
0-90	9.4	15.9	16.9, 10.5
0-100	11.7	—	—, 13.0
PASSING, 45-65 MPH	2.4	4.0	4.0, 2.5
QUARTER MILE	13.0 sec @ 104.9 mph	15.8 sec @ 89.5 mph	16.0 sec @ 87.5 mph, 13.9 sec @ 103.5 mph
BRAKING, 60-0 MPH	114 ft	121 ft	126, 110 ft
LATERAL ACCELERATION	0.92 g (avg)	0.83 g (avg)	0.85, 0.88 g (avg)
MT FIGURE EIGHT	25.1 sec @ 0.74 g (avg)	27.5 sec @ 0.62 g (avg)	27.0 sec @ 0.64 g (avg), 25.8 sec @ 0.72 g (avg)
TOP-GEAR REVs @ 60 MPH	1,400 rpm	2,150 rpm	1,700, 1,500 rpm
CONSUMER INFO			
BASE PRICE	\$88,795	\$36,295	\$29,195, \$34,200 (mfr est)
PRICE AS TESTED	\$100,025	\$36,750	\$32,050, \$34,400 (mfr est)
STABILITY/TRACTION CONTROL	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes
AIRBAGS	8: Dual front, front side, f/r curtain, front knee	9: Dual front, f/r side, f/r curtain, driver knee	9: Dual front, f/r side, f/r curtain, driver knee
BASIC WARRANTY	4 years/50,000 miles	5 years/60,000 miles	5 years/60,000 miles
POWERTRAIN WARRANTY	4 years/50,000 miles	10 years/100,000 miles	10 years/100,000 miles
ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE	4 years/Unlimited miles	5 years/Unlimited miles	5 years/Unlimited miles
FUEL/BATTERY CAPACITY	18.0 gal	13.2 gal + 1.62-kWh Li-ion battery	15.9 gal
EPA CITY/HWY/COMB ECON	20/27/23 mpg	45/51/47 mpg	27/37/30, 26/35/29 (est) mpg
ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY	169/125 kWh/100 miles	75/66 kWh/100 miles	125/91, 130/96 kWh/100 miles
CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB	0.86 lb/mile	0.41 lb/mile	0.63, 0.66 lb/mile
RECOMMENDED FUEL	Unleaded premium	Unleaded regular	Unleaded regular, premium

2020 Mercedes-Benz CLA 250 4Matic, AMG CLA 45 4Matic+	2020 Nissan Sentra SR	2020 Porsche Taycan 4S, 2020 Porsche Taycan Turbo S
Front-engine, AWD	Front-engine, FWD	Front/rear motor, AWD
Turbocharged I-4, alum block/head	I-4, alum block/head	Permanent-magnet electric motors
DOHC, 4 valves/cyl	DOHC, 4 valves/cyl	–
121.5 cu in/1,991cc	121.9 cu in/1,997cc	–
10.5:1, 9.0:1	10.6:1	–
221 hp @ 5,800 rpm, 382 hp @ 6,500 rpm	149 hp @ 6,400 rpm	562, 750 hp (comb)
258 lb-ft @ 1,800 rpm, 354 lb-ft @ 4,750 rpm	146 lb-ft @ 4,400 rpm	479, 774 lb-ft (comb)
6,300, 7,000 rpm	6,500 rpm	Not indicated
15.8, 9.7 lb/hp	21.0 lb/hp	9.1, 7.0 lb/hp
7-speed twin-clutch auto, 8-speed twin-clutch auto	Cont variable auto	1-speed auto (front), 2-speed auto (rear)
4.13:1 (gears 1, 2, 4, 5, R), 2.39:1 (gears 3, 6, 7)/1.74:1; 3.93:1 (gears 1, 2, 5, 6, R), 2.68:1 (gears 3, 4, 7, 8)/1.81:1	5.10:1/1.93:1	8.05:1/8.05:1 (front), 8.16:1/8.16:1 (rear)
Struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar	Struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar	Control arms, air springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar; multilink, air springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar
14.4:1, 14.5:1	15.3:1	14.2–9.3:1
2.5; 2.4	2.5	2.5
13.0-in vented disc; 12.6-in disc, 13.8-in vented, drilled disc; 13.0-in vented, drilled disc, ABS	11.0-in vented disc; 10.2-in disc, ABS	16.5-in vented, drilled 2-pc carbon-ceramic disc; 16.1-in vented, drilled 2-pc carbon-ceramic disc, ABS
7.0 x 18-in, 9.0 x 19-in cast aluminum	7.5 x 18-in cast aluminum	9.5 x 21-in; 11.5 x 21-in forged aluminum
225/45R18 91H M+S Michelin Primacy MXM4 ZP, 255/35ZR19 96Y Michelin Pilot Sport 4S	215/45R18 89V Hankook Kinergy GT (M+S)	265/35R21 101Y; 305/30R21 101Y Pirelli P Zero PZ4
107.4 in	106.8 in	114.2 in
63.5/63.1, 63.6/62.9 in	62.4/62.4 in	66.5/65.2 in
184.6 x 72.0 x 56.7, 184.8 x 75.6 x 55.4 in	182.7 x 71.5 x 57.0 in	195.4 x 77.4 x 54.3 in
36.1, 38.1 ft	38.1 ft	34.1 ft
3,498, 3,724 lb	3,122 lb	5,116, 5,221 lb
60/40%	61/39%	49/51%
5	5	4
38.5/35.7 in	37.5/36.7 in	38.2/36.8 in
41.8/33.9 in	44.0/37.4 in	41.8/32.2 in
55.1/54.0 in	56.4/54.5 in	56.4/53.2 in
11.6 cu ft	14.3 cu ft	2.9 (front); 12.9 (rear) cu ft
2.1, 1.4 sec	3.3 sec	1.4, 1.0 sec
3.1, 2.0	4.8	2.0, 1.4
4.4, 2.7	6.6	2.6, 1.9
6.0, 3.6	8.8	3.4, 2.4
7.8, 4.7	11.6	4.3, 3.0
10.1, 6.0	15.2	5.3, 3.8
12.7, 7.5	19.5	6.5, 4.6
–, 9.2	–	7.8, 5.7
3.1, 1.8	4.5	1.5, 1.1
14.5 sec @ 95.8 mph, 12.1 sec @ 113.6 mph	16.8 sec @ 84.1 mph	11.6 sec @ 121.9 mph, 10.3 sec @ 133.3 mph
125, 109 ft	121 ft	107, 104 ft
0.86, 0.99 g (avg)	0.85 g (avg)	1.03, 0.98 g (avg)
26.5 sec @ 0.67 g (avg), 24.1 sec @ 0.80 g (avg)	27.5 sec @ 0.61 g (avg)	23.6 sec @ 0.84 g (avg), 23.6 sec @ 0.86 g (avg)
1,550, 1,450 rpm	2,250 rpm	5,950 (front); 6,050 (rear) rpm
\$39,645, \$55,795	\$22,575	\$105,150, \$186,350
\$47,935, \$73,850	\$26,055	\$146,040, \$204,420
Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes
10: Dual front, f/r side, f/r curtain, front knee	10: Dual front, f/r side, f/r curtain, front knee	8: Dual front, f/r side, f/r curtain, front knee
4 years/50,000 miles	3 years/36,000 miles	4 years/50,000 miles
4 years/50,000 miles	5 years/60,000 miles	4 years/50,000 miles
4 years/50,000 miles	3 years/36,000 miles	4 years/50,000 miles
13.2, 13.5 gal	12.4 gal	93.4 kWh
23/33/27, 20/29/23 mpg	28/37/32 mpg	68/71/69, 67/68/68 mpg-e
147/102, 169/116 kWh/100 miles	120/91 kWh/100 miles	50/47, 50/50 kWh/100 miles
0.73, 0.83 lb/mile	0.62 lb/mile	0.00 lb/mile (at vehicle)
Unleaded premium	Unleaded regular	120-/240-volt AC & 400-/800-volt DC electricity

Benchmark



We know what it means. Or at least what it's supposed to mean. Yet the word *excellence* in today's hyperbolic lexicon has become the go-to endorsement of everything from resort timeshares to pharmaceutical marketing to pork industry remediation. Let's assume for the moment that the word has been somewhat diluted.

Climb into a 2021 Mercedes-Benz E-Class, however, and you will immediately understand the true emotional and physical definition of the word, its impact, and its inferred accountability. In sedan, coupe, or wagon form, the new E-Class is a stunning accomplishment. And it is the *MotorTrend* 2021 Car of the Year.

The Mercedes-Benz E-Class carries the stout imprimatur of old-school luxury, from the graining of the dashboard wood to the suppleness of the heated and ventilated, posture-correct leather seats. But it is also thoroughly modern, from the robust yet efficient responsiveness of its engines to the plethora of high-tech and high-zoot features. The E-Class epitomizes an automotive brand in full, one whose currency in the current zeitgeist of automotive wants and desires is unmatched.

"As the car market contracts and SUVs continue to gobble up market share, it says something about a company that a midcycle refresh of a sedan could take an already good car and move it to greatness," senior features editor Jonny Lieberman said.



MOTOR TREND CAR OF THE YEAR®

MERCEDES RE-ESTABLISHES THE THREE-POINTED STAR AS THE SYMBOL OF THE LUXURY SEDAN

WORDS MARK RECHTIN
PHOTOGRAPHS BRANDON LIM





The E-Class marries Old World wood and leather with modern displays, but the MBUX interface could use some improvements.



Mercedes didn't need the E-Class to be this magnificent, this dominant, Lieberman added. "They could have slapped on some new body panels, updated the engines, and called it a day. But the engineers went the extra mile. They pulled the all-nighter. Put in the hard work. The result? Car of the Year."

Yes, our Car of the Year is a mere midcycle update to a vehicle that has been on the market for several years. Some of you may wonder how and why such a car

merits this award—especially when our COTY field boasted the innovation of the Porsche Taycan, the flash of the BMW 8 Series Gran Coupe, and the newfound value story of the Nissan Sentra.

But when there is a midcycle change so dramatic, so striking, so ... well, excellent, we open our garage doors.

German luxury automakers have a long history of intertwining major design changes and powertrain updates so that there is always something new every few years. Many other automakers take a "fire and forget" approach, where everything is clean-sheet at the redesign every five or six years.

Four years ago, the restyled E-Class rolled out with new but uninspired sheetmetal, an inconsistent nine-speed transmission (depending on the engine it was paired to), body control issues on sweeping curves, and a tendency to

understeer on sharper winding roads. At the time, we stated, "In all, the [E-Class] was not convincingly at the top of its class—either as a sport sedan or a luxury sedan. It has all the right ingredients to be either but couldn't seem to do both at the same time."

What a difference four years makes.

"The E-Class delivers on every front you can think of—both from a passenger's view and from the driver's," *MotorTrend en Español* managing editor Miguel Cortina



AMG gets in the action with "53" and "63" trim levels, depending on your performance preference.



WHEN A MIDCYCLE CHANGE IS SO DRAMATIC, SO STRIKING, SO ... WELL, EXCELLENT, WE OPEN OUR GARAGE DOORS.

said. "It's the one that makes everyone feel special, the one that delivers the best experience, and the one that stands out from the rest of the segment. It does everything right and shows the legacy that it has playing in a segment like this. Feels truly like a Mercedes should. And it does it all naturally."

What is perhaps most impressive is that the E-Class extends its excellence across all body types and performance measures. The dynamics of a sedan are different than those of a coupe, owing to dimensional differences and the divergent expectations and driving habits of their owners. Then, the body of a convertible or wagon requires a massive restructuring of sheetmetal and reinforcing crossmembers, with completely unique and specific geometries. A taut coupe can turn into a floppy convertible. Same for the transformation of a sedan into a wagon. And can the same platform provide a plush ride for the mainstream while bringing the hammer for the performance-minded?

Any automaker trying to create that many variants from the same basic platform will usually deliver at least one throwaway, one vehicle that felt like an afterthought. In past years, Mercedes has given some of its non-sedan models insufficient R&D coverage, and the result felt half-baked.

Not so with the 2021 E-Class. Whatever the shape or task, the E-Class excels. The sedan is firmly in the "family transport" milieu without sacrificing performance when needed. The coupe is rigid and gutsy, the convertible a luxe seaside



At MotorTrend, we are partial to wagons, especially ones like the E 63 S, which may be the fastest school-run chariot ever.

conveyance with a top-down "Air Cap" that won't disturb your intentionally tousled coif, and the AMG E 63 S Wagon is a thunderbolt that will transform anyone's preconceived idea of a mom-mobile. (A note on the platform-sharing E 450 All-Terrain: It's an E-Class, but because of its ground clearance, Mercedes-Benz insists on classifying it as an SUV. As such, it competed separately in our SUV of the Year competition.)

In addition, clicking through drive modes provides actual dynamic differences in throttle, braking, and suspension response. You want to loaf along with your family? Done. You want to charge up a canyon? Check. You want to tackle an autocross? Can do—though testing director Kim Reynolds noted that the sedans felt "fast but heavy" in the figure eight. Hey, you want bank vault safety and an indomitable ride? That adds some

pounds, but as Reynolds added, "It's as solid as granite."

On top of all that engineering and manufacturing complexity, Mercedes then invites in its AMG team to create models that deliver brain-sizzling performance without sacrificing any of the luxury.

"What stands out here is how excellent this chassis is," Cortina said. "Being able to support everything from an E 350 sedan to the menacing AMG E 63 and include the coupe, convertible, and wagon is just inexplicable. It speaks for what Mercedes engineers were going after, and they delivered in a perfect package."

Added Lieberman: "My most-improved award goes to the convertible. It used to have some of the worst cowl shake I've ever experienced from a modern car. I'm now very happy to report that finally the E-Class convertible feels like an E-Class: solid, refined, luxurious, better than the competition. Very impressed, Mercedes."

Now, to go under the skin. Mercedes offers its 362-hp, 369-lb-ft M256 3.0-liter turbocharged mild hybrid inline-six engine as the heart of the E-Class lineup. It features an integrated starter-generator that delivers 21 hp of electrical "EQ Boost" to help acceleration from a dead stop while the turbos spool up. It also contributes to fuel economy and reduced CO₂ emissions. Its 48-volt onboard electrical system means there are no belts for the water pump and air conditioning, which reduces parasitic losses from the engine. It also allows the car to "sail" in Eco mode with the engine turned off.

As a result of this new tech, the E 450 4Matic sedan accelerates like a V-8 (with a rapid 0–60 of 4.6 seconds and a quarter mile of 13.3 seconds at 103.2 mph in our tests) while also delivering 23/30/26 mpg city/highway/combined in the most recent EPA fuel economy tests. Not quick enough for you? You can upgrade to the 429-hp E 53 or even to the bonkers 603-hp AMG E 63 S 4Matic+, which will turn a blistering three-flat 0–60 and an 11.2-second quarter mile at 124.2 mph. Meanwhile, for those on less than a baller's budget, the base



E 350 comes with a 2.0-liter turbo-four that generates 255 hp and 273 lb-ft and still gets to 60 mph in a claimed 6.1 seconds while returning 22/31 mpg city/highway.

Mercedes engineers also have improved the shifting of its nine-speed automatic transmission. "There is a steady pull of power, yet some gearshifts are literally unnoticed," Reynolds said.

The Merc's exquisite Air Body Control suspension is the best \$1,900 you will ever spend on an option. (It's even available on the base E 350.) It soaks up freeway chop, road rash, and bumps and divots with impunity. "On the freeway its ride is smooth and floaty, but on the twisty roads it shows its handling and sporty side without being shy," Cortina said. Added Buyer's Guide director Zach Gale: "What fantastic ride quality. One of the best of any car I've driven in a while."

As for accommodations, the E-Class delivers exactly what people expect from a Mercedes: luxury, and more.

Our test model came with seats that were not only heated and ventilated with adjustable lumbar support and several massage settings but were also "multicontoured" with bolsters that activate to give your ribcage extra support under hard cornering. Be sure to tick the box for "seat kinetics," which gently adjusts your spine and hips every few minutes—it's orthopedics at work on long drives. The Cabriolet models come with special sun-reflective leather that remains cooler than regular leather when baking in direct sunlight. In cooler weather that still invites top-down motoring, the "Air Scarf" provides neck-level heating.

Looking ahead in the cockpit, the driver sees twin 12.3-inch displays that unfurl layer after layer of information. And here resides our one big gripe with the E-Class: MBUX. Although the screens are gloriously crisp, the new MBUX infotainment system and user interface raised the ire of nearly every editor for its overly (and needlessly) complicated nature.

"I'm not unfamiliar with MBUX, but the amount of times I had to focus on the center display screen or take my hands off the wheel to try the touchpad or touchscreen is unacceptable," features editor Christian Seabaugh said. An irked Gale noted that MBUX's integration of Apple CarPlay didn't fill the perimeter of the screen, merely a reduced square of it.

Adding to the MBUX frustration are the capacitive screen navigation buttons located on the steering wheel. They're intended to keep your hands on the wheel rather than fiddling with the mouse-style touchpad, but Seabaugh noted, "It doesn't



Mercedes has seriously upped its cabriolet game, with features like the Air Scarf neck warming system and sun-reflective leather to keep occupants comfortable.

respond the same way each time." Added associate road test editor Erick Ayapana, "Thankfully, the touchscreen is so good." But seeking out information through the myriad menus can be a distracting chore that other automakers do better.

The saving grace of the E-Class infotainment system is the optional Burmester surround sound stereo, which Ayapana described as "so great, so clear; I want it for my house."

It's a car journalism trope to describe a luxury car's interior as a "cocoon." But one struggles to provide another metaphor. The interior's sense of style and refinement immediately puts the driver and passenger into a state of lavish comfort. Mercedes has an old-luxury reputation, and the suppleness of the leather seats and grain and gloss of trim materials plays to that. Meanwhile, the turbine-style air vents lend a feeling of Buck Rogers retro-futurism. It's a good blend.

The cocooning continues in the back seat, to a point. Although the backs of the front seats are smartly contoured

to provide more rear kneeroom, the E-Class is not among the segment leaders in providing space to sprawl in back. It's acceptable enough, as the 6-foot-1 Seabaugh described it as "plenty spacious."

In short, the E-Class is not trying to be something that it is not. People expect certain sensual and tactile sensations when they engage with the three-pointed star, and the E-Class delivers the reassurance of sitting inside a whisper-quiet yet thunderous Mercedes-Benz sedan.

"Such a solid, feel-good car," Seabaugh said. "It's ridiculously competent. I feel like every time I drive the E 450, I discover something new. This is a car I could happily drive every day for years on end."

But the E-Class is more than just a platform engineering masterpiece. It's a design statement—which is a difficult accomplishment while still maintaining an air of understated assurance. Mercedes tore up the existing droopy lozenge of its exterior form and transformed it into an assured, planted sedan with pronounced shoulders and crisp character lines running the length of the fuselage.

The angular slashes that replace the sulky ovoid taillights of the incumbent are dynamic and confident. The trunklid has a jaunty flip at its trailing edge that keeps the stance of the car from falling off toward the rear bumper. And there's its face, with a presence that carries just a hint of intimidation—to let bystanders know you have attained something of substance and are not to be trifled with.

Of course, Mercedes-Benzes are always anticipated to be safe. Although the 2021



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2021 CAR OF THE YEAR

2021 Mercedes-Benz E 450 4Matic (cabriolet), 2021 Mercedes-AMG E 53 4Matic+ (coupe)

2021 Mercedes-Benz E 450 4Matic, 2021 Mercedes-AMG E 63 S 4Matic+ (sedans)		
DRIVETRAIN LAYOUT	Front-engine, AWD	Front-engine, AWD
ENGINE TYPE	Turbocharged I-6, alum block/head, plus electric motor	Turbocharged I-6, alum block/head, plus electric motor, Twin-turbo 90-deg V-8, alum block/heads
VALVETRAIN	DOHC, 4 valves/cyl	DOHC, 4 valves/cyl
DISPLACEMENT	183.0 cu in/2,999cc	183.0 cu in/2,999cc, 243.0 cu in/3,982cc
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.5:1	10.5:1, 8.6:1
POWER (SAE NET)	362 hp @ 5,500 rpm (gas) + 21 hp (elec); 362 hp (comb), 429 hp @ 6,100 rpm (gas) + 21 hp (elec); 429 hp (comb)	362 hp @ 5,500 rpm (gas) + 21 hp (elec); 362 hp (comb), 603 hp @ 5,750 rpm
TORQUE (SAE NET)	369 lb-ft @ 1,600 rpm (gas) + 184 lb-ft (elec); 369 (comb), 384 lb-ft @ 1,800 rpm + 184 lb-ft (elec); 384 (comb)	369 lb-ft @ 1,600 rpm + 184 lb-ft (elec); 369 (comb), 627 lb-ft @ 2,500 rpm
REDLINE	6,500; 6,300 rpm	6,300, 7,000 rpm
WEIGHT TO POWER	10.5; 12.5 lb/hp	12.0, 7.4 lb/hp
TRANSMISSION	9-speed automatic	9-speed automatic
AXLE/FINAL DRIVE RATIO	2.82:1/1.69:1, 3.07:1/1.87:1	4.69:1/2.82:1, 3.06:1/1.87:1
SUSPENSION, FRONT; REAR	Multilink, coil springs, air springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar; multilink, coil springs, air springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar	Multilink, air springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar; multilink, air springs, adj shocks, anti-roll bar
STEERING RATIO	15.2:1, 14.5:1	15.5:1, 14.5:1
TURNS LOCK TO LOCK	2.3, 2.1	2.3, 2.1
BRAKES, F; R	14.2-in vented, drilled disc; 14.2-in vented disc, ABS, 14.6-in vented, drilled disc; 14.2-in vented disc	14.2-in vented, drilled disc; 14.2-in vented disc, 15.8-in vented, drilled carbon-ceramic disc; 14.2-in vented, drilled carbon-ceramic disc, ABS
WHEELS, F; R	8.0 x 19-in, 8.0 x 20-in; 9.0 x 20-in cast aluminum	8.0 x 18-in cast aluminum, 9.5 x 20-in; 10.0 x 20-in forged aluminum
TIRES, F; R	245/40R19 98H Pirelli Cinturato P7 (M+S), 245/35R20 95Y; 275/30R20 97Y Pirelli P Zero (run flat)	245/45R18 100H Pirelli Cinturato P7 (M+S), 265/35R20 99Y; 295/30R20 101Y Michelin Pilot Sport 4S
DIMENSIONS		
WHEELBASE	113.1 in	115.7 in
TRACK, F/R	62.9/63.2, 64.1/62.8 in	62.9/63.0, 64.9/62.8 in
LENGTH X WIDTH X HEIGHT	190.4 x 73.1 x 56.6, 190.9 x 73.2 x 56.3 in	194.3 x 73.7 x 57.8, 196.4 x 75.1 x 56.6 in
TURNING CIRCLE	37.5, 39.7 ft	38.2, 40.4 ft
CURB WEIGHT	4,517, 4,489 lb	4,330, 4,490 lb
WEIGHT DIST, F/R	54/46, 55/45%	55/45, 56/44%
SEATING CAPACITY	4	5
HEADROOM, F/R	38.7/36.4, 40.9/36.4 in	37.3/37.6, 37.4/38.2 in
LEGROOM, F/R	41.8/34.1 in	41.7/36.1, 41.4/36.2 in
SHOULDER ROOM, F/R	56.1/48.4, 50.3 in	57.8/57.1, 57.8/57.1 in
CARGO VOLUME	9.5, 10.7 cu ft	13.1 cu ft
TEST DATA		
ACCELERATION TO MPH		
0-30	1.6, 1.4 sec	1.5, 1.1 sec
0-40	2.3, 2.1	2.4, 1.7
0-50	3.3, 3.0	3.4, 2.3
0-60	4.4, 4.0	4.6, 3.0
0-70	5.9, 5.2	6.1, 3.8
0-80	7.4, 6.8	7.9, 4.8
0-90	9.5, 8.5	10.0, 5.9
0-100	11.8, 10.5	12.4, 7.1
PASSING, 45-65 MPH	2.3, 2.1	2.5, 1.4
QUARTER MILE	13.1 sec @ 104.8 mph, 12.6 sec @ 108.2 mph	13.3 sec @ 103.2 mph, 11.2 sec @ 124.2 mph
BRAKING, 60-0 MPH	130, 113 ft	127, 109 ft
LATERAL ACCELERATION	0.88, 0.91 g (avg)	0.83, 0.97 g (avg)
MT FIGURE EIGHT	25.6 sec @ 0.71 g (avg), 25.3 sec @ 0.74 g (avg)	26.2 sec @ 0.69 g (avg), 23.6 sec @ 0.87 g (avg)
TOP-GEAR REV @ 60 MPH	1,400, 1,450 rpm	1,400, 1,450 rpm
CONSUMER INFO		
BASE PRICE	\$75,500, \$77,300	\$63,050, \$108,550
PRICE AS TESTED	\$87,410, \$100,410	\$79,280, \$138,040
STABILITY/TRACTION CONTROL	Yes/Yes	Yes/Yes
AIRBAGS	10: Dual front, f/r side, f/r curtain, f/r head	9: Dual front, f/r side, driver knee, f/r curtain
BASIC WARRANTY	4 years/50,000 miles	4 years/50,000 miles
POWERTRAIN WARRANTY	4 years/50,000 miles	4 years/50,000 miles
ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE	4 years/50,000 miles	4 years/50,000 miles
FUEL CAPACITY	17.4 gal	21.1 gal
EPA CITY/HWY/COMB ECON	23/29/25, 21/28/24 mpg	23/30/26, 15/23/18 mpg
ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY	147/116, 160/120 kWh/100 miles	147/112, 225/147 kWh/100 miles
CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB	0.76, 0.82 lb/mile	0.75, 1.09 lb/mile
RECOMMENDED FUEL	Unleaded premium	Unleaded premium

model year E-Class has yet to be tested, the 2020 edition gets top-scoring five-star marks in frontal, side, and rollover crash tests from NHTSA. The IIHS also gives top-scoring Good ratings, earning the 2020 model a Top Safety Pick+.

The E-Class also comes with a laundry list of active safety features to prevent an accident in the first place, including autonomous braking with a turning maneuver function that can detect stopped cars and pedestrians. Also, its blind-spot assist now works when the car is parked and the driver is soon to exit the car.

The E-Class also offers one of the finest smart cruise control systems in maintaining distance and initiating braking in stop-and-go traffic; it can hold a full stop for up to a minute before re-engaging. However, the lane keeping software would occasionally (and startlingly) clench the brakes and swerve the car back into the middle of the lane if the driver wandered.

As to the value element of our six key criteria, one might ask what sort of value a luxury car purchase can entail with a starting price of \$55,300 that can quickly climb north of six figures. But luxury can surprise you in terms of retained value over the life of a car. According to *MotorTrend* subsidiary IntelliChoice, the E-Class line is mostly “average” or better in terms of its five-year cost to own. Coupes and convertibles are typically less impressive in their retained value, and the Merc is no exception. However, of key assurance to first-time E-Class sedan buyers, the entry-level E 350 sedan in rear-drive and 4Matic trims are rated “excellent.”

But outside of the dollars and cents, there is also sense and sensibility. There is a reason people aim for the three-pointed star. There is heritage and reputation. There is solidity and trust. There is value in those intangible elements.

Some car companies do less with complete redesigns than Mercedes did with a midcycle change, all while restricted to the confines of retaining the hard points for the Sindelfingen manufacturing line (which, by the way, will be CO₂ neutral by 2022).

“The Mercedes feels three times as well built, as well engineered, as sophisticated as the competition,” Lieberman said. “The Mercedes is a superior vehicle in terms of ride quality, dynamics, kinematics, or any other measurements you can think of. You feel the difference.”

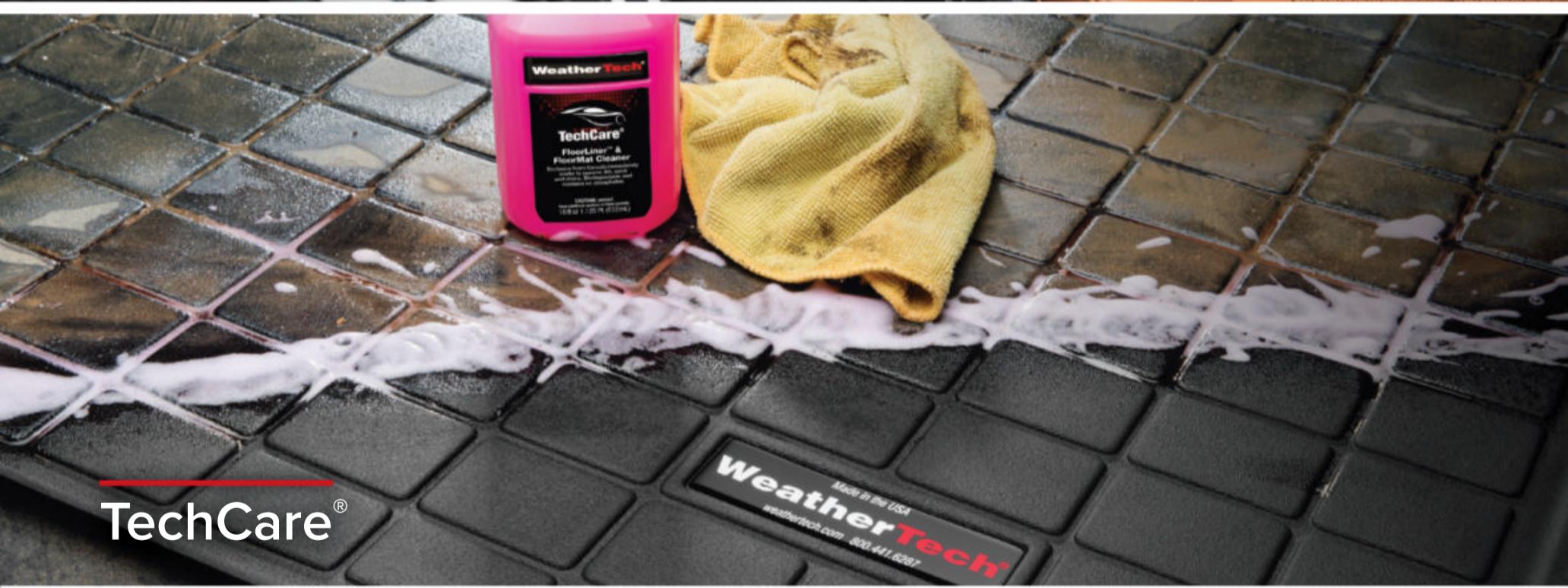
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FORBIDDEN FRUIT

WORDS ANGUS MACKENZIE
PHOTOGRAPHS ELLIOT BIRKBECK

Compared with many of today's compact SUVs, the 2020 Suzuki Jimny is slow, crude, and cramped. It drives a lot like a mid-'80s rear-drive Japanese car. But it's also so honest and unpretentious, so full of character and charm, and so surprisingly capable at doing what it was designed to do that it makes you smile every time you slide behind the wheel—something that's unlikely to ever happen getting into a Toyota RAV4 or Chevy Equinox.

In today's fast-paced, ultra-connected, digitally enhanced automotive world, the Jimny is one of life's simple pleasures.

It's a simple pleasure with a complicated back story, though. Our Jimny tester was one of the last in the Suzuki U.K. press fleet, as the vehicle has been withdrawn from sale—less than two years after its launch—so Suzuki can meet stricter European passenger vehicle fleet average emissions targets in 2021. And it's forbidden fruit for U.S. consumers, Suzuki having exited the American market in 2012 (unless Toyota comes to the rescue with a harebrained but technically plausible rebadged version, given it owns a 5 percent stake in Suzuki).

The Jimny traces its roots back 50 years, to a tiny, Jeep-like 4x4 called the

WITH CLASSIC 4X4 DESIGN CUES AND AN OLD-SCHOOL 4X4 DRIVELINE IN A PINT-SIZE PACKAGE, IT'S LIKE DRIVING THE JEEP WRANGLER'S LITTLE BROTHER. BUT IT'S NOT FOR SALE HERE.

LJ10. Launched in April 1970, the Suzuki Jimny LJ10 had a ladder-frame chassis, leaf-sprung live axles front and rear, and a selectable four-wheel-drive system with a low-range transfer case and no center differential. It was powered by an air-cooled, two-stroke two-cylinder engine that displaced a mere 360cc and produced a breathless 25 hp. It would do 47 mph, flat out. But with a curb weight under 1,400 pounds, it would scamper over rocks and through mudholes like a mountain goat.

Fast-forward half a century, and the Jimny still has a ladder-frame chassis, live axles front and rear, and selectable four-wheel drive with a low-range transfer case. It still looks a bit like a baby Jeep. Some things have changed, however. The front and rear axles are now coil sprung. Under







The compact proportions and light weight that give the Suzuki Jimny its mountain goat prowess off-road also help make it a surprisingly competent SUV on tight city streets.

the hood is a water-cooled 1.5-liter I-4 whose spark plugs fire every fourth piston stroke. The engine makes four times the power of the LJ10's tiny two-stroke but only takes the fourth-generation Jimny to about twice the top speed. Blame frontal area and weight: The 2020 Jimny is 13.7 inches wider and 2.2 inches taller than the LJ10 and weighs almost twice as much.

It still scampers through the rough stuff, though.

That's because the Jimny—143.5 inches long, 64.7 inches wide, 67.9 inches tall, and weighing just 2,500 pounds—is incredibly small and light by 21st century standards. And it has a chassis designed for off-roading. Ground clearance is 8.3 inches, and minimal overhangs deliver 37-degree approach and 49-degree departure angles. Breakover angle is 28 degrees.

For context, a two-door Wrangler is 23.3 inches longer, 9.2 inches wider, 5.7 inches taller, and 1,500 pounds heavier (give or take, depending on model). In Rubicon

spec, the two-door Wrangler boasts a better approach angle—43 degrees—and has the same breakover angle, but its 37-degree departure angle is worse.

The Jimny's 1.5-liter four-banger develops 100 hp at 6,000 rpm and 95 lb-ft of torque at 4,000 rpm, and it drives through either a five-speed manual or four-speed automatic. It's a thrummy little engine, but it's a willing worker and happiest if you keep it spinning at 2,000 rpm or more. The manual Jimny will bowl along the freeway at 70–75 mph all day long, the engine turning 3,400–3,600 rpm in fifth gear. The ride is what you'd expect from a tall, narrow, light vehicle with a short wheelbase and off-road suspension: busy, with plenty of fore-aft pitch motions.

Control weights—steering, braking, clutch—and shift feel of the five-speed

manual are vintage late-'80s Japanese, light and slick. And although the Jimny is always jitterbugging about on anything other than a perfectly smooth road, it feels as tight as a drum, with none of the subtle shimmies and shudders you often notice in a body-on-frame vehicle. The least sophisticated element of the on-road drive experience is the transfer case noise. It's not the high-pitched whine that used to blight old Defenders, but more of an industrial white noise, loud enough to mask the engine note at cruising speeds.

Activating the 4WD system requires successive tugs on a stubby lever behind the shifter to get the driveline out of two-wheel drive and into high-range 4WD and then low-range 4WD. Pull the lever back from 2H to 4H—at speeds up to 62 mph—and a light on the dash tells you 4WD is engaged. Selecting 4L, which engages a 2.00:1 reduction gear in the transfer case, requires coming to a full stop, just like in Land Rovers and Toyota Land Cruisers. A beep lets you know you're good to go, and warning lights on the dash show the stability control and forward collision alert are disabled. The 4.43 first gear, 4.09 final drive, and 2.00:1 reduction gear give the Jimny a crawl ratio of 36.2:1 in low range, nowhere close to a Wrangler Rubicon's, but again, it weighs substantially less.

The Jimny's 4WD driveline has no center diff; the front and rear axles are locked together in both 4WD modes. But it isn't entirely old school, having "virtual" front and rear limited-slip differentials, as well. If the wheels diagonally opposite each other break traction, the brake on each electronically activates to stop it spinning and ensure maximum torque goes to the wheel that has traction. It's an ingeniously simple solution to an off-roading scenario that has caught out more than a few experienced drivers.

Dependable traction, light weight, good ground clearance, and compact dimensions make the Jimny a better performer off-road than its engine's modest power and torque figures would suggest. Serious off-rovers would like more axle

THE JIMNY'S 1.5-LITER FOUR-BANGER IS A THRUMMY LITTLE ENGINE, BUT IT'S A WILLING WORKER.





articulation, and the standard 15-inch wheels and 195/80 Bridgestone Dueler H/T tires are definitely road-biased, but the aftermarket can fix both issues.

Ironically, the same qualities that endow the Jimny with solid off-road capability make it a surprisingly good city vehicle, especially somewhere like London, where streets are narrow and traffic is heavy. All-round visibility is good, and the slab sides and square corners make squeezing through tight gaps between cars and trucks a breeze. At



3.8 turns lock to lock, the steering feels a little low-gear, but the tough suspension and tall sidewall tires shrug off gnarly cobbled streets and rim-crunching potholes.

The interior, like the drivetrain, is a mix of '80s Japanese hardware and 21st century technology. The cloth seats are manually adjusted, and there's a tiny information screen jammed between a

2020 Suzuki Jimny

PRICE	\$25,000 (est, U.K.)
LAYOUT	Front-engine, 4WD, 4-pass, 2-door SUV
ENGINE	1.5L/100-hp/95-lb-ft DOHC 16-valve I-4
TRANSMISSION	5-speed manual, 4-speed auto
CURB WEIGHT	2,450–2,500 lb (mfr)
WHEELBASE	88.6 in
L X W X H	143.5 x 64.7 x 67.9 in
0-60 MPH	15.0 sec (MT est)
GLOBAL (WLTP) COMBINED FUEL ECON	27.6–30.6 mpg
ENERGY CONSUMPTION, COMB	110–122 kWh/100 miles
CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB	0.63–0.70 lb/mile
ON SALE	Currently, global markets

speedo and tach whose orange graphics were hip when David Lee Roth quit Van Halen. The first time. (RIP, Eddie.)

But standard equipment on the range-topping SZ5 also includes modern goodies such as cruise control, lane departure and forward collision warning, phone connectivity, and a nav system with traffic updates. Air conditioning, power windows, and privacy glass are also standard.

What makes the Suzuki Jimny so oddly appealing—apart from its off-road chops and chunky industrial-chic design—is that it's ... a real driver's car. In most modern SUVs you'd be bored tooling along at the speed limit on a winding road; in the Suzuki you're deeply engaged in the art of driving. You're mindful of momentum, of making sure you have the right gear at the right time, working to steer and brake smoothly, and watching for lumps and bumps in the road that might catch out the chassis. It's a bit like driving a classic car. Suddenly, the world seems a calmer place, the frenetic pace of modern life slightly eased. ■



A dynamic photograph of a blue Ferrari Roma driving on a winding road. The car is positioned in the lower right corner, showing its front grille and headlight. The background is a blurred landscape of green hills and vineyards, suggesting speed and movement.

WORDS ANGUS MACKENZIE

The 2021 Ferrari Roma is an emphatic celebration of the Italian gran turismo, a genre that in the 1950s and '60s resulted in some of the most beautiful and desirable cars ever built in Maranello. But the Roma is not a carefully crafted homage to the past, a contrived pastiche of retro whimsy wrapped around 21st century hardware. No, this Ferrari GT is in every way a thoroughly modern interpretation of a classic automotive concept, cleverly engineered and superbly executed.

First things first: The Roma is not a replacement for the Portofino, Ferrari's other V-8-powered front-engine GT. It is an addition to the lineup, and with a price

SHEER PACE, UNFLAPPABLE POISE

A SHIMMERING RETURN
OF THE CLASSIC ITALIAN GT,
WITH A MODERN EDGE

tag of \$222,620 it's by a fraction the least expensive new Ferrari you can buy. In the rarefied world of Ferrari-nomics, it's a stone-cold bargain.

The Roma is an amalgam of existing Ferrari hardware and software, refined, repurposed, and renewed. The Roma's platform is based on that of the Portofino, but it's 70 percent new. Variants of the 3.9-liter twin-turbo V-8 under the Roma's hood can be found in five other Ferrari models. The Roma's eight-speed dual-clutch transmission is fundamentally the same as the one that made its debut in the SF90. It is the first Ferrari GT car to get Side Slip Control 6.0, which was unveiled on the race-face 488 Pista

in 2018, and the first whose manettino dial allows you to select Race mode.

Inside, the Roma shares the Human Machine Interface concept first seen in the SF90, with a curved 16-inch high-def instrument panel screen and steering wheel with capacitive touch control switches in the horizontal spokes. Additional touch control switches for lights and exterior mirror adjustment are located in a pod to the right of the steering wheel, and like the SF90, the transmission is controlled by switches arranged in a housing on the center console that recalls the iconic Ferrari metal shiftgate.

Unlike the SF90, however, the Roma offers an 8.4-inch portrait-format

touchscreen mounted high between the central flying buttresses, which extend from the floor to the dash. And, as in cars like the GTC4Lusso, an 8.8-inch screen located on the passenger side of the dash is available as an option.

Photographs don't do the Ferrari Roma justice. In the metal, Ferrari's new GT—designed in-house under the direction of Flavio Manzoni—looks wider and lower and much more dramatic, the traditional cab-rearward proportions and sensual surfaces of the upper body playing off





edgily modern front and rear graphics. Slim headlights and a substantial splitter give the Roma's snout a sharklike menace. What you can't see are the race car-style vortex generators on the underfloor at the front of the car that help the Roma generate more downforce on the front axle than the Portofino.

The body-colored grille, insouciantly described by Ferrari as holes drilled into a sculpture, is the most controversial part of the exterior, and deliberately so, says Ferrari's head of GT cars exterior design, Andrea Militello. "The idea was the car has such a clean and classic shape, it needed design elements to show the future and modern technology," he says. "A conventional grille with chrome wouldn't have been right." The sharply undercut rear panel is a modern riff on the chopped Kamm tail seen on '60s Ferraris like the legendary 250 GTO, and the Roma is the first Ferrari since the cantankerous 348 not to have round taillights.

Design chief Manzoni's desire to keep the Roma's tail low required the development of an active spoiler that sits just below the rear window. The spoiler has three settings: Low Drag, Medium Downforce, and High Downforce. In the Low Drag setting, the spoiler sits flush with the rear window. In High Downforce mode, it's deployed at a 135-degree angle to the rear window, generating 209 pounds of downforce on the rear axle at 155 mph, with just a 4 percent increase in drag. In the mid setting, the spoiler develops about 30 percent of maximum downforce with a mere 1 percent increase in drag. The spoiler's activation thresholds are determined by vehicle speed and the manettino setting.

There is no start button in the Ferrari Roma—you simply touch the logo on the steering wheel boss as if you were opening an app on your smartphone, and the car wakes up. Touch it once more, and the engine snarls into life. Touch switches on the steering wheel toggle between

instrument panel configurations. The standard display has, as is traditional with Ferraris, a large tachometer front and center, flanked on the left and right by navigation and audio screens and detailed vehicle information. Touch the View Max logo, and you can have a full-screen map instead, or a giant race car-style tach arching across the center of the screen, with a g-meter on the right-hand side.

In Roma spec, the 3.9-liter twin-turbo V-8 makes 612 hp—21 more horses than in the Portofino. The extra power comes from revised cam profiles and new sensors in the turbocharger housings that more accurately monitor the turbines' revs and allow them to spin 5,000 rpm higher than before. The power increase comes despite the fitment of power-sapping gasoline particulate filters in the redesigned exhaust system. Maximum torque of 561 lb-ft is the same as in the Portofino and is also available from just 3,000 rpm, but because of the engine tweaks, the torque peak hangs on 500 rpm longer, to 5,750 rpm.

The new eight-speed dual-clutch transmission is more compact and 13.2 pounds lighter than the seven-speed unit in the Portofino. The clutch module is 20 percent smaller but can handle 35 percent more torque. The ratios are different from those used in the SF90 version, and it has a reverse gear. (The hybrid SF90 uses its electric motors to reverse the car.) A more powerful electronic control unit means significantly quicker shift times.

Left to its own devices, the transmission is alert yet smooth. In Comfort mode the transmission upshifts early, slipping into eighth gear as low as 45 mph on part throttle to help reduce fuel consumption. But squeeze your right foot, and it quickly drops back a few gears when you need

a burst of acceleration. And although it boasts a specific output of 157 hp per liter, the twin-turbo V-8 is anything but highly strung; it's happy to trickle about town turning little more than 1,200 rpm.

It shares its 105.1-inch wheelbase with the Portofino, but the Roma is 2.8 inches longer, 1.4 inches wider, and 0.7 inch lower, and—crucially—it weighs a claimed 227 pounds less. The Roma's rear spring rates are thus 10 percent softer, and its wider track and lower center of gravity mean the roll rate is 10 percent lower. Although the Roma initially feels more buttoned down than, say, an Aston Martin DB11 V8, after a few miles you'll notice a subtle fluency to the ride you don't get in the Portofino. The ride quality and the tall gearing give it the relaxed, long-legged gait that defines all great GT cars; this is a Ferrari in which you'd happily put away 1,000 miles in a day.

Here's what makes the Roma truly special: It's a proper GT, but it's also supercar quick in the twisty bits.

There's no Jekyll-and-Hyde transformation from cruiser to crusher when you twist the manettino to Sport or even Race mode: The Roma's back road pace and poise is fundamentally baked into the hardware. That V-8 under the hood might be turbocharged, but it responds to throttle inputs with the precision of a naturally aspirated engine, zinging effortlessly to its 7,500-rpm redline. It's wonderfully smooth and tractable below 2,000 rpm and explosively epic from 5,000 rpm up, but the transition between the two states is superbly linear.

The dual-clutch transmission responds instantly to commands from the paddles,



What makes the Ferrari Roma special is that it is not only a proper long-distance grand tourer but also supercar quick in the twisty bits, even without turning the manettino to activate Sport or Race mode.



AS IS TRADITION WITH FERRARIS, THE STANDARD DISPLAY HAS A LARGE TACHOMETER FRONT AND CENTER.

as do the brakes to the pedal, which has shorter travel and a higher modulation rate than the Portofino setup. The steering is quick, response building rapidly the moment you pull the wheel off center, but the implacable authority of the front axle means the Roma goes exactly where you point it. The nose stays exactly where you want it even as you get into the power, and the e-diff and traction control systems funnel maximum torque through the rear tires.

The Roma is designed to cross continents, soft bags in the trunk and jackets tossed in the rear seats. But its sheer pace and unflappable poise on a demanding road will thrill and amaze you. No other GT comes close to having the calm precision of this Ferrari.

The wizard behind the curtain is Ferrari's brilliant Side Slip Control 6.0, which brings all the Roma's onboard dynamic control systems under the watchful eye of an algorithm designed to maximize driver enjoyment. The beauty is that it works with you as a driver, helping you achieve what you want to achieve rather than digitally rapping your knuckles when you do something wrong. It's utterly seamless and unintrusive and can be tailored to suit road conditions and your talent level.

As mentioned, the Roma is the first Ferrari GT with Race mode. Among other things, it enables the Ferrari Dynamic Enhancer, a lateral dynamic control system that adjusts the brake pressure on each wheel to balance the car as the limits of adhesion are breached. It's not a stability control system, per se, Ferrari



dynamics guru Stefano Varisco says, but it's designed to "flank" traditional stability control parameters to make the Roma feel more predictable once the rear tires run out of grip. In other words, it'll help you drift like a boss.

Of course, if you're talented enough—and have the room to play—you can switch everything off.

The Roma is not perfect. The exhaust note is perhaps a touch too intrusive in a steady-state cruise. The plastic design feature that wraps around the instrument panel binnacle causes reflections in the windshield if the sun is in the wrong place. You can occasionally hear the eight-speed transmission thunk between ratios when you lift off at low speeds on a light throttle. And the reliance on touch-screens means you have to hunt and peck to set up things like the climate control. But in terms of niggles, that's about it.

The 2021 Ferrari Roma is a fast and glamorous GT, thoroughly engaging to drive, whether it be mooching down to the coffee shop or charging up a mountain pass. But it's also a Ferrari you can genuinely use every day, with all the comfort and connectivity you need and a factory seven-year maintenance program included in the price. And while



2021 Ferrari Roma

PRICE	\$222,620
LAYOUT	Front-engine, RWD, 2-pass, 2-door hatchback
ENGINE	3.9L/612-hp/561-lb-ft twin-turbo DOHC 24-valve V-8
TRANSMISSION	8-speed twin-clutch auto
CURB WEIGHT	3,450 lb (mfr)
WHEELBASE	105.1 in
L X W X H	183.3 x 77.7 x 51.2 in
0-62 MPH	3.4 sec (mfr est)
EPA FUEL ECON	Not yet rated
ON SALE	Late 2020

we're talking price, remember that the Roma coupe costs less than the Portofino convertible and is a far better car all around. Sure, the Roma is, for most of us, an eye-wateringly expensive ride. But as a Ferrari, it's a bargain. ■

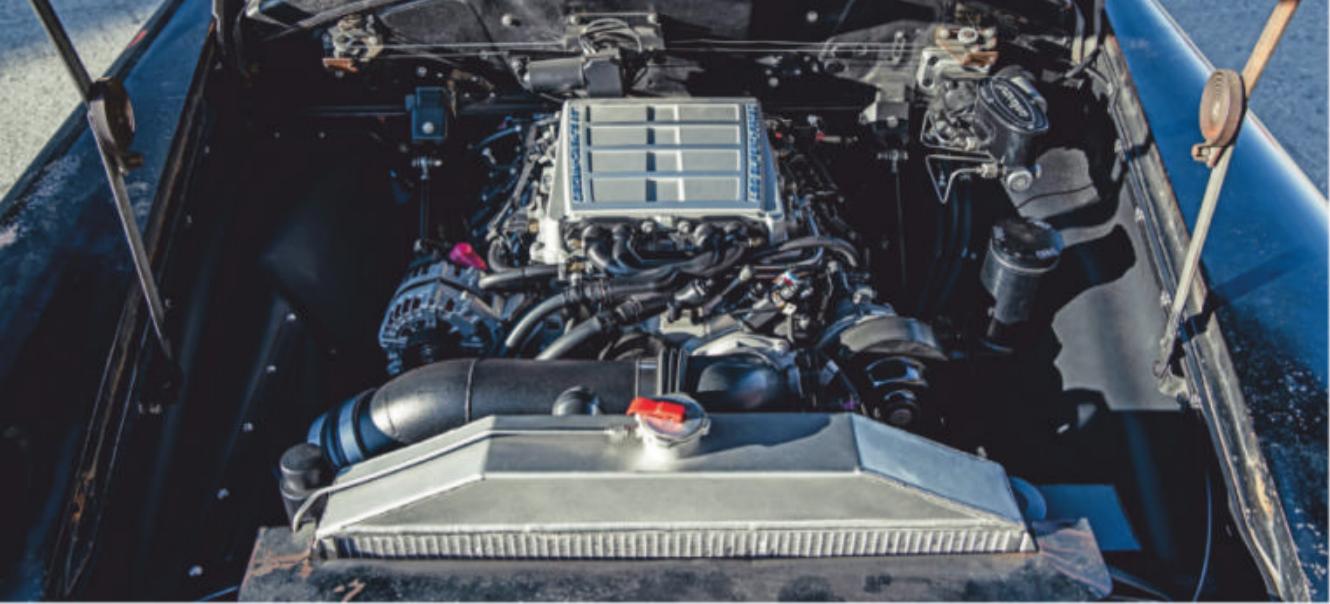


Instant Icon

THIS HUDSON RESTOMOD STRIKES THE PERFECT BALANCE OF PRESERVATION AND MODIFICATION

WORDS SCOTT EVANS PHOTOGRAPHS BRANDON LIM





The long, black coupe sits in a pool of sunlight washing down through a gap in the overpass above us. The engine burbles a classic V-8 refrain from hidden tailpipes as the headlights and hood ornament glow like candles in a winter window. An elbow rests on the open windowsill, but the driver is obscured by deep shadow. Surely, we've either stepped back in time or onto the set of a film noir.

Then all hell breaks loose.

The engine roars, its supercharger screaming over the exhaust and careening off the concrete walls. The spinning rear

tires compete in the race to damage our hearing as the car becomes one with a cloud of smoke then emerges in a fury.

This isn't the '40s, that's not Humphrey Bogart, and that's no ordinary hot rod. It's the 1949 Hudson Derelict Coupe by Icon.

The exhaust note was the tell. It wasn't the smooth hum of a Hudson straight-eight, and it sure wasn't the straight-six that accompanied this 1949 Commodore down the factory floor. No, the syncopated mumbling that presaged the verbal assault could only be a Chevy V-8. But this is no carbued 350 crate motor, either. It's a 638-horsepower LS9 from a C6 Corvette ZR1.

But wait, is this a Hudson, a Chevrolet, or a Derelict? *¿Por qué no los tres?* The same year *MotorTrend* was founded, this 1949 Hudson Commodore Six rolled out of the company's Detroit factory with all of 121 hp and a Drive-Master automated three-speed manual transmission. Seven decades later, Jonathan Ward—Icon founder and the calf muscle behind the auditory onslaught—would pull it out of a barn and nearly sextuple its hp under his Derelict line of pseudo-preservation hot rods. It looks nearly original, fully embracing its three historical generations of patina. Beneath the crackled paint, though, it's anything but.

The Derelict story began 20 years ago when Ward salvaged a 1952 Chrysler Town & Country Wagon, which he would eventually build up into his personal project. Ward's vision was a thoroughly modern car underneath a carefully preserved, protected, and lightly but discreetly modified body and interior. Sealing the failing paint under a protective coating and leaving the hazy, pitted chrome be, he named it the Derelict—even if it was only true of the look. Replete in its '52 DeSoto Custom Sedan front clip, the car was an instant hit.

This Derelict, the 19th in the series, has a similar backstory. It was pulled out of a North Carolina barn rather than a Southern California backyard and was commissioned with a simple request from its future owner: Make me a car I can bar-hop around Nashville. The buyer didn't even specify the car, just the era. Ward sold him on the Hudson with the help of the owner's son, who immediately recognized the resemblance to Doc Hudson from the original *Cars* movie. (Doc was a 1951 Hudson Hornet, derived from the Commodore.) Ward had been wanting to do a Hudson after he put a Tesla Model S powertrain under a '49 Mercury. Now Ward had his chance.

More than anything, though, Ward had a headache. The third-generation Commodore is best known for pioneering what we now call “unibody” chassis design. Hudson called it “monobuilt” officially and “step-down” casually, but the idea was simple: Instead of setting the body on top of a ladder frame like





other vehicles of the time, Hudson made the frame rails pooch out and run around the perimeter of the cabin, under the doors instead of straight under the cabin. This allowed the company to lower the body, the roof, and the seats, giving the car a shockingly low stance by the standard of the day. It also made the car exceptionally strong for the time and safer in a crash. Modern cars still use roughly the same design.

For Ward, this meant he couldn't just lift off the body and set it on an Art Morrison ladder chassis, like he does with most of his projects. But Art Morrison also does separate front and rear subframes with independent suspensions. After a

lot of work, Icon's builders grafted the subframes onto the Hudson.

You won't see any of these details without crawling under the car, and that's not easy, as low as it sits. Lie on the ground and peek up, and you'll find a modern multilink design in the rear and control arms in front, both supported by coilover springs and shocks. A traditional hot rodder might've slammed it to the ground, but Ward has a rule: Any car he builds has to be able to pull up to a curb without any risk of damage. Even on Icon-designed 18-inch forged aluminum wheels (made to look like old four-point steel rims) hiding behind the original hubcaps, the Hudson looks the business.

Aside from the wheels, which are so subtle you'd easily miss them, the exterior only has two other giveaways, each in a pair. The most obvious are the copper Derelict badges behind the front wheels. The other is a pair of badges on the doors, just under the windows, etched with the letters BAM. No, those aren't the owner's initials. They stand for, you guessed it, "Bad-Ass Motherf***er." But why?

"The previous owner was JC Whitney crazy," Ward says. Aftermarket visors on

the windshield and door windows were removed, along with a grille guard for a Pontiac. They all came off easily, but the badges glued to the doors didn't. The adhesive had damaged not only the paint but also the metal underneath. Patching and painting to match the patina would be next to impossible, so Ward suggested covering the holes. The badges are machined stainless steel aged with acid and sealed with museum wax to give them a period look.

What was under the hood didn't work for Ward. Specifically, there was nothing under the hood, but it wouldn't have mattered if the famous Hudson Six had been there. Icons get big power. In went the supercharged LS9, racy dry-sump oiling system and all.

"I'm never doing a dry sump again," Ward says. "It was a huge pain in the ass. There's a reason most builders just put a regular pan on the engine."

The sump, along with the battery, engine computer, fuse box, and other electronics, hides behind a false panel in the trunk. Under the hood, most of what you see is a modern engine and empty space. Look closer, though, and you'll see more of Icon's handiwork. The Wilwood brake master cylinder that drives the Icon-specific Brembo brakes is obvious, but look again, and you'll see the struts flanking the engine. The Commodore was strong for 1949, but this is 2020, and the chassis has to control 517 more hp. You'll notice the cable-operated windshield wipers are driven by a modern motor.



THE COMMODORE WAS STRONG FOR '49, BUT IT HAS TO CONTROL 517 MORE HP.





"I couldn't get rid of that system," Ward says. "It's too cool. So we just upgraded it."

Behind the engine is a GM 4L85-E electronically controlled four-speed auto. He wanted to keep it an auto rather than cut up the floor, and he has an affinity for the 4L85. "Four gears is enough," he says. "Six is too many. So is five."

Modern touches are far harder to spot inside, in the finest Icon tradition. Aside from Ward's trademark cast lizard statue on the dash, the gimmies are the carpets and floormats, German wool trimmed in leather cut in ways they wouldn't have been in the '40s. If you're not familiar with the period, the seat covers and door cards might fool you, but they're hand-sewn leather with painted alligator skin inserts. The cupholders are designed to look like a period aftermarket part, but they're new, too.

Only a Hudson expert will spot the other big changes. The speaker grilles aren't original; they're sand-cast copies of a vintage aftermarket piece Ward had been saving. The steering wheel is an original piece, mostly. The translucent blue rim really was offered on high-trim Commodores, but it's been recast. Ward also used the opportunity to shrink the wheel diameter to a more comfortable 16 inches, "so it's not in your lap." With power steering, a bus-sized wheel isn't necessary anymore. It's connected to a reproduction vintage-look steering column that tilts, too.

The air vents are harder for even the experts to spot. The spearlike trim piece running across the bottom of the dash was originally a solid piece, but Icon replicated it in aluminum and added vents with laser-cut vanes and controls that hide 3-D-printed ducts. The simple control knobs in the center are modern replicas with new lettering to reflect their functions: headlights, fan speed, vents, temperature, and wipers.

"The originals actually didn't line up right," Ward says. "They were too close together and the mechanisms behind them didn't fit, so they were all off. The design was probably rushed into production, because it was never corrected."

Above them, the original radio is still in place, but it's been gutted and

fitted with modern components. Forget AM—pushing any preset activates the Bluetooth connection. You select the song on your phone; the left knob controls volume, and the right handles treble/bass. A subwoofer also hides in the trunk with the battery.

Similarly, the original hand brake lever actuates an electric parking brake.

The original instruments have been gutted and retrofitted, too. It's one of my favorite Icon details, and it's deceptively simple. Stepper motors are attached to the backs of the needles and run by a microcontroller with data from the engine computer. In this case, though, to retain the odometer functionality and the bounciness of old gauge needles, Ward used a device that attaches the stepper motors to old-fashioned cable drives that interface with the old gauges. As someone who hates the way modern gauges look in vintage cars, this warms my heart like Ward warms the tires.

Being the builder of the car and ultimately responsible for it, Ward is happy to beat on it more than I am. He charged the guy something like \$560,000 to build it; selling my house wouldn't put that much cash in my pocket. He rips the burnouts, and I'm satisfied with the freeway pulls. Out there, it feels damn quick for an old car, though not like a C6 ZR1. Makes sense, since this car is, by Ward's estimate, 1,000 pounds heavier. Even so, a word to the Nashville car scene: Don't try to stoplight drag this car. I keep it under 100, where the original dial speedometer runs out. Fun detail: It reads in single digits, so you have to mentally add a zero to each numeral. I thought it was the tach at first. Ward has taken it faster, but burying the

needle messed up the calibration, so I save him another headache.

Leaving the highway, I duck through a foothill town and into the mountains north of Simi Valley. I know from driving the Art Morrison chassis in the Derelict Chrysler/DeSoto Wagon years ago that an Icon car can handle. But bench seats aren't conducive to cornering.

I can sense the car will turn a lot harder than I'm pushing it around these guard-rail-free mountain bends. But I'd be trying to hang onto the door with one hand and palming the wheel with the other, which doesn't seem like the smartest idea. The steering wheel has a little play on center—enough to fool you into thinking it isn't modern rack-and-pinion—but once you're turning, it's precise.

The brakes don't mind the car's roughly 4,300-pound curb weight or the nearly 100-degree temperature outside. The engine doesn't mind the heat, either, running a constant temperature whether I'm pushing or cruising.

Cruising, really, is what this car does best. The springs and dampers are on the soft side, allowing it to float down the highway and gently bob up and down with the bigger bumps and dips.

The Derelict feels the way you wish classic cars would drive, the way you'd like to imagine they drove when they were new (but in reality didn't), because Icon uses modern suspension design, modern power steering, and a modern engine.

In that way, it's my ideal restomod. I love vintage cars, but they're painfully slow by modern standards, don't stop worth a damn, and even the sporty ones don't really handle that well. I want the look, inside and out, but I want it to drive more like a modern car. I want it to be reliable like a modern car. I want everything to work every time. I want this car. Or maybe the original Derelict. No, what I really want is the Volvo 1800 sunbathing in Ward's lot, waiting on a new commission after the last one fell through. Just gotta sell the house first. ■



MOTOR TREND

500 WHEN LEGENDS LIT UP RIVERSIDE

WORDS THOMAS VOEHRINGER AND MIKE FLOYD PHOTOGRAPHS MOTORTREND ARCHIVES



THREE-PART DOCUSERIES,
THE MOTOR TREND 500:
NASCAR HEADS WEST,
SHOWCASES THE HISTORY
OF STOCK CAR RACING'S
SEMINAL SOCAL EVENT

GURNEY STREAK STARTS (1963)

Joe Weatherly is the 1962 Grand National champion and the one to beat. Dan Gurney, though, qualifies fastest and comes from 11th place to win the inaugural Motor Trend 500.

A CHAMPION FELLED (1964)

Joe Weatherly won the Grand National (driver's) Championship again in 1963 while driving for nine teams. A year later, he's unable to control his Mercury coming into Turn 6 and dies after his head collides with the retaining wall. He is the first of two fatalities that occur during MT 500 races.

TRAILBLAZER (1963) Wendell Scott of Virginia qualifies 33rd in the 44-car field. He finishes 18th and later becomes the first and, to this date, only Black driver to win a Grand National event. He's invited back for the second-annual Motor Trend 500, where he secures an alternate driver spot, but he doesn't get to race.



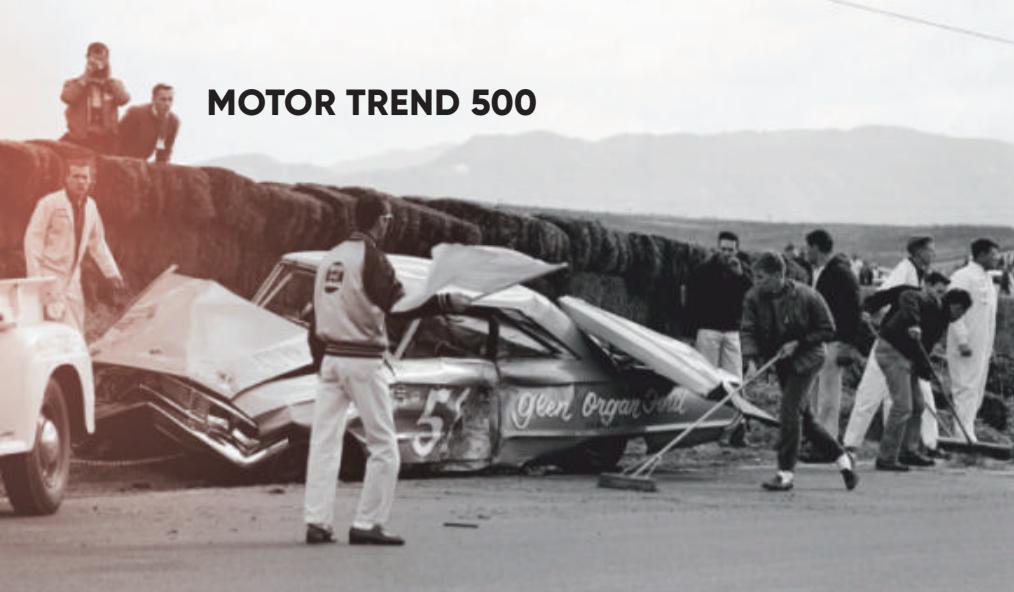
THROUGH THE TWISTIES (1963) The notorious esses: This group of turns culminating in Turn 6 proves most challenging for oval-track racers.

A collaboration between NASCAR, Riverside International Raceway, and Petersen Publishing (the company that founded *MotorTrend* and *Hot Rod* magazines), the Motor Trend 500 offered West Coast motorsports enthusiasts an opportunity to see big-money stock car racing for the first time. Traversing the golden age of the muscle car era, the Motor Trend 500 was the longest and richest road course event in the Grand National Series, the precursor to what would become the NASCAR Winston Cup and the modern NASCAR Cup Series.

Over a period from 1963 to 1971, some of the greatest drivers to ever race a car—including Richard Petty, Dan Gurney, A.J. Foyt, Parnelli Jones, and Mario Andretti—took to the track at Riverside. It's a story so compelling that it has become the subject of a special three-part documentary series debuting on the *MotorTrend* app called *The Motor Trend 500: NASCAR Heads West*.



MOTOR TREND 500



A LUCKY ONE (1964) On lap 15, Riverside veteran Clem Proctor's slide into Turn 1 leads to an acrobatic battering of his new Ford Galaxie. Although the sheetmetal takes a pounding, Proctor escapes with only minor injuries. In the years to come, Proctor will claim two victories at Riverside International Raceway in NASCAR's Late Model Sportsman division.



CHECK, PLEASE (1964) Robert Petersen, the founder of *MotorTrend* and *Hot Rod* magazines, hands Dan Gurney another winner's check (his second of five) while Race Queen, a young Linda Evans, looks on holding the winner's trophy.

As NASCAR started to gain popularity nationwide, a push began to bring the series west in a big way. The venue eventually chosen to host the major event was the newly constructed Riverside Raceway east of Los Angeles, where in 1963 the first Motor Trend 500 was run—the history of which is detailed in the documentary's opening “Driven” episode. As part two's “Danger” outlines, Riverside was an ultimate test of driver skill, given its twisting layout unlike the NASCAR tracks back east. The 2.7-mile circuit was also treacherous, taking the lives of 21 drivers over its 32-year existence. During the MT 500 races alone, two drivers died, and Foyt almost died in a now-storied crash. “Dominance,” the final segment, chronicles the exploits of hometown boy Gurney, who won five of six MT 500 races at Riverside during a stretch that became the stuff of legend.

Narrated by *Roadkill* star David Freiburger, *The Motor Trend 500: NASCAR Heads West* features appearances from many of the major players and racers of the era—all while weaving in incredible archival footage and historical context. It's not just a NASCAR story; it's a story of California and the people who brought the excitement of big-time motorsports to the American West.



PIT LANE SPEED (1964) It's the dawn of modern pit stops, pioneered and exemplified by the Wood Brothers team. Swapping two tires and adding fuel is a 30-second endeavor in '63. By 1967, the Wood crew gets it below 11 seconds. The Wood Brothers' two Ford Galaxies finished 1-2, with Dan Gurney's No. 121 a full lap ahead of teammate Marvin Panch's No. 21 car.



FOYT'S HARROWING CRASH (1965) A.J. Foyt pushes Gurney hard, but on lap 169, in the fastest portion of the track, Foyt's car experiences brake failure. He drives into the infield to avoid the Turn 9 wall and endos several times, sustaining serious injuries. Upon his Grand National return, in April at Atlanta Motor Speedway, Foyt takes the checkered flag.



FLAMING FORD (1965) After bumping the wall in Turn 6, Ned Jarrett stops by the pits for gas and repairs. His car ignites, and although no one is hurt, his Ford is toast.



NOTHING TO IT (1965) Fred Lorenzen, like Fireball Roberts, can often be seen driving one-handed. Lorenzen is particularly noted for having one hand on the roof during a race.



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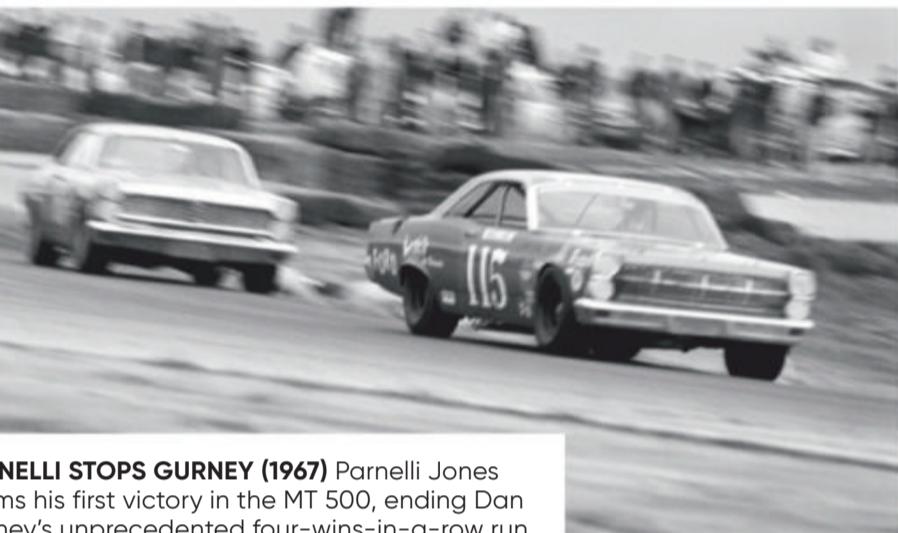
MOTOR TREND 500



TOUGH TRACK (1966) Richard Petty told the *Los Angeles Times*, "It was pretty embarrassing, trying to get up through them switchbacks without running off in the dirt," which he does often.



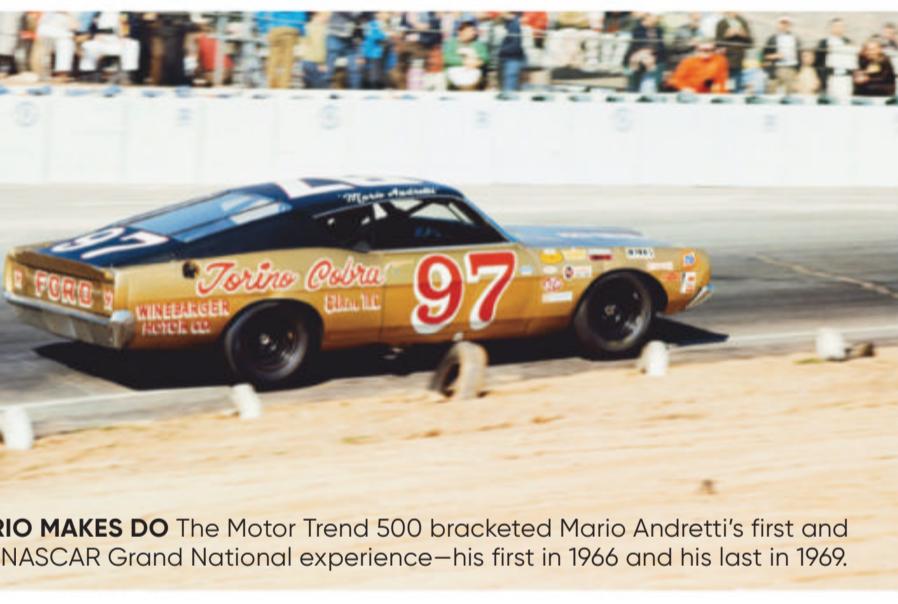
MORE TRAGEDY (1966) This will be Billy Foster's last Motor Trend 500. An accident in Turn 6 claims his life during qualifications for the 1967 MT 500.



PARNELLI STOPS GURNEY (1967) Parnelli Jones claims his first victory in the MT 500, ending Dan Gurney's unprecedented four-wins-in-a-row run.



FOUR FOR FIVE (1968) Gurney loses a tire halfway around the track, but quick pit work helps him nail his fifth Motor Trend 500 victory. The race starts and finishes with the same drivers in the first three positions.



MARIO MAKES DO The Motor Trend 500 bracketed Mario Andretti's first and last NASCAR Grand National experience—his first in 1966 and his last in 1969.



GURNEY GETS WING (1970) For 1970, Gurney moves to the new Plymouth Superbird under the Petty Enterprises banner. This ties in with his All American Racers Trans-Am team effort fielding the Plymouth 'Cuda.



FOYT TAKES IT (1970) Parnelli Jones sets a new track record and leads for 88 laps despite starting 35th due to a NASCAR ruling against Firestone Tires. Foyt, in car No. 11, takes the lead, keeping his '70 Ford in front for the checkered flag.

CHRYSLER CRUISES (1971) Ray Elder beats legends Bobby Allison, Bobby Isaac, and Richard Petty to become the first driver of a Chrysler product to win the MT 500. Three of the top five finishers are Dodges.



INDEPENDENTS RISE
By 1971, most factory teams have pulled out of racing and the key racing celebs have retired, leaving plenty of upward mobility for independent racers such as J.D. McDuffie, Dick Guldstrand, and Paul Dorrity. ■





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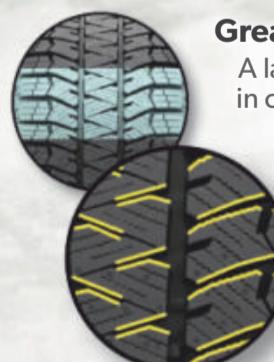
Microscopic view of Multi-Cell compound with bite particles

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Updates on our long-term fleet

MT GARAGE

PHOTOGRAPHS RENZ DIMAANDAL



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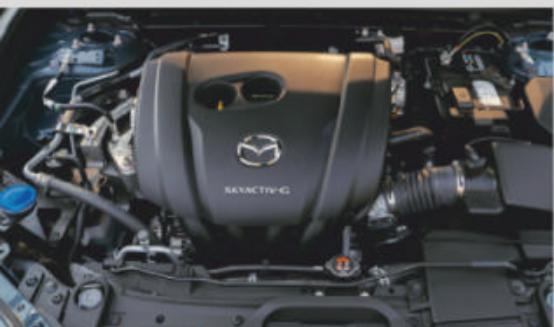
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Christian Seabaugh

Base Price \$30,700 As Tested \$31,625

Like the relationship of Jim and Pam on *The Office*, an automaker evolving from a mainstream to a luxury brand is compelling to watch. There's a will-they-won't-they tension as the product and marketing teams fight customer perception as they attempt to get from A to B.

Some brands have been successful. Hyundai, which went from selling Excels to Equuses (eventually spinning that off as the Genesis luxury brand), springs to mind.



Others, such as Chrysler's mid-'00s pivot, fell flat. The latest automaker to attempt the transition is Mazda, and we'll be spending the next 12 months with the 2020 CX-30 Premium AWD to see how this brand in transition is faring.

Why the CX-30 instead of something like a Mazda 6 or CX-5 Signature, you ask? Simple: It's Mazda's latest vehicle, and it competes in a heavily contested subcompact SUV segment. This is a segment that's seen down-market entries from the luxury heavy hitters—Audi, BMW, and Mercedes-Benz—as well as upscale attempts from mainstream automakers such as Buick and Kia. To paraphrase Frank Sinatra, if Mazda can make it here, it can make it anywhere.

Our new Polymetal Gray Metallic (god, I hate modern car paint names) CX-30 seems well suited for the challenge. For starters, our top-spec Premium model looks the part of a pint-sized luxury ute with crisp, elegant lines and understated brightwork. Inside, the CX-30 has an unmistakably upscale cabin with a lovely mix of colors, textures, and materials, with the soft and supple white and brown leather found on the seats and dash being our favorite feature.

As expected in a modern luxury SUV, our CX-30 Premium comes with the obligatory set of technology.

On the entertainment front it has a crisp 8.8-inch infotainment display (don't touch, though; it's controlled via a scroll wheel on the center console), Android Auto and Apple Car Play compatibility, and a 12-speaker Bose audio system. On the safety front, the CX-30 has a color head-up display, radar cruise control with stop and go, lane keep assist, and automatic emergency braking.

If there's a potential weak spot in the CX-30's armor, for now it's its engine. Whereas most competitors have torquey turbocharged engines, the CX-30 makes do for now with a

SPECS **Vehicle Layout** Front-engine, AWD, 5-pass, 4-door SUV
Engine 2.5L/186-hp/186-lb-ft DOHC 16-valve I-4
Transmission 6-speed automatic
Curb Weight (F/R Dist) 3,363 lb (60/40%)
0-60 MPH 7.9 sec
Energy Cons, City/Hwy 135/105 kWh/100 miles
CO2 Emissions, Comb 0.70 lb/mile

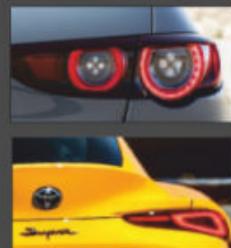


UPDATE
BMW 228iMERCEDES-BENZ
GLE 450**UPDATE**
GENESIS G70NISSAN
SENTRA**UPDATE**
HONDA CIVIC SIRAM
2500 HD

KIA SOUL

SUBARU OUTBACK
UPDATE

KIA TELLURIDE

TOYOTA
RAV4**UPDATE**
MAZDA 3TOYOTA GR
SUPRA**ARRIVAL**
MAZDA CX-30VOLVO S60
VERDICT

The CX-30's interior features many unmistakable premium features that highlight Mazda's goal of moving upmarket.



CX-30 at 25/32/27 mpg city/highway/combined.

Pricing for the base front-drive CX-30 2.5 S starts at \$23,000, with AWD adding \$1,440 and the premium package tacking on another \$6,260. Our loaded Premium AWD tester stickered for \$31,625, with a cargo cover, cargo tray, floormats, auto-dimming rearview mirror, and wireless phone charging pad making up the \$925 difference.

Will the CX-30 succeed in convincing us that the famed Japanese brand is on its way to becoming a premium automaker? This little Mazda has a year to convince us.

2.5-liter I-4 making 186 hp and 186 lb-ft of torque, paired with a standard six-speed automatic—and on our car, optional all-wheel drive. (Mazda has already committed to adding a 250-hp turbocharged engine to the CX-30 for the 2021 model year.) The EPA rates our new

**2020 Mazda 3**

Service life:
10 mo/13,465 mi • Avg Fuel Econ: 28.2 mpg

"Mazda takes an alternative approach to infotainment, and in many ways, it's a success." **Duncan Brady**

Avg CO₂ 0.69 lb/mi Energy cons 120 kWh/100 mi
Unresolved problems None Maintenance cost \$144.03 (oil change, inspection, tire rotation) Normal wear \$0 Base price \$24,520 As tested \$28,420 EPA City/Hwy/Comb Fuel Econ 25/35/29 mpg Real MPG 33.9 mpg comb

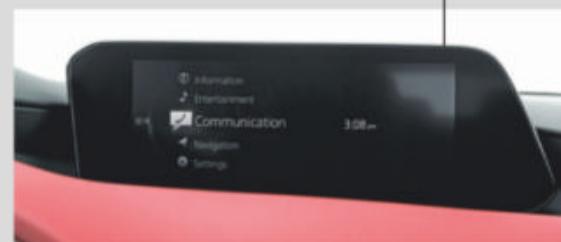
Infoentertainment designers have a tough job these days. Drivers will no doubt compare the responsiveness, resolution, design, and ease of use to their touchscreen pocket computers, and few automotive systems compare favorably.

Mazda takes at least one step to avoid such comparisons; unlike the touchscreen interfaces offered in every other compact sedan and compact hatch, Mazda's infotainment system is controlled primarily by a rotary dial and volume knob located between the front seats. Useful hard buttons for navigation, media, home screen, and back are positioned around the primary dial. Additional controls can be found on the steering wheel.

Skipping touch functionality allows Mazda to position the 8.8-inch display high on the dash. Compared to a touchscreen system's positioning within arm's reach of the driver lower on the dashboard, the Mazda system is closer to the driver's field of view, so a quick glance doesn't take your eyes off the road for as long.

The center rotary knob turns with a satisfying tactility, as does the smaller volume knob alongside it. Both controls are comfortable to use and, importantly, easy to find with the hand without looking down. That said, the glossy piano black trim around the controls and shifter appears cheap and scratched up, even less than a year after the 3 joined our long-term fleet.

Navigation is acceptable, but we'd likely skip the Mazda system and use Apple CarPlay or Android Auto. Voice controls are useless for entering an address, and using the rotary dial is slow. I love how when using the integrated navigation system, directions appear on the optional head-up display, but that's about the only benefit to using the Mazda system instead of whatever smartphone navigation software you're used to.



2020 Subaru Outback



Service life:

5 mo/5,398 mi • Avg Fuel Econ: 22.3 mpg

"Can the Outback compete with SUV functionality? Time to weigh the lifted wagon's conventional SUV strengths." Zach Gale

Avg CO₂ 0.87 lb/mi Energy cons 153 kWh/100 mi Unresolved problems None Maintenance cost \$0 Normal wear \$0 Base price \$35,905 As tested \$37,995 EPA City/Hwy/Comb Fuel Econ 23/30/26 mpg Real MPG 24.5 mpg comb

The Outback has inspired imitators, but none has ever come close to this wagon/quasi-SUV's success. After a couple months with the 2020 Outback, we have a better idea of how it compares to the midsize two-row SUVs it competes against.

For years, Outbacks have offered SUV practicality at a lower price than some competitors. That's still mostly true for the 2020 Outback. Let's start with the cargo area. Every Outback has 32.5 cubic feet of space behind the seats. That's more spacious than the Chevrolet Blazer and Nissan Murano but falls short

of the Ford Edge and Honda Passport. The Subaru's cargo floor is conveniently low because it's a lifted wagon. There's no underfloor storage, unfortunately, but two levers easily fold down the rear seats from the cargo area.

In the back seat, the Outback feels spacious for two. There's even a ton of headroom. The seat recline latch is located at the bottom of the outboard seat backs, and every Outback except for the base model gets two rear-seat USB ports.

We're focusing on interior practicality here, but two of the Subaru's biggest strengths are its retractable crossbars in



Although the Subaru Outback has the look and dimensions of a lifted wagon, it still offers many of the SUV features consumers want.

the roof rack and the standard AWD, which we've found effective off-road.

Beyond fitting into the midsize "carlike SUV" segment, the Outback is a crossover in another sense, too. The pricing is so reasonable that Subaru's consumer site compares the wagon to compact and midsize SUVs. Some SUVs do a better job of making room for the middle-seat passenger with a flatter drivetrain hump, though.

The Outback is longer than most of its competitors. If you're considering a Forester, that spacious Subaru is 9.2 inches shorter, which should make it easier to park. Even though

the Outback's rear visibility is better than that of many of its competitors, rear headrests that fold down out of the way would make it that much better.

Image, of course, is one of the biggest reasons some will stick with an SUV over the Outback. Over the past couple decades, wagons have transitioned from the go-to choice for families to a niche option for those who want to be different. So far, the Subaru more than earns its place in the midsize SUV segment. Buyers brave enough to try this lifted wagon should mostly be pleased with how its interior functionality compares to an SUV.

2019 Genesis G70



Replacing this twin-turbo V-6 might make a worthy M3 rival.



Service life:

11 mo/12,460 mi • Avg Fuel Econ: 20.3 mpg

"The car is calm and collected. Although the G70 likes to slide, it does so with almost slow-motion progression." Jethro Bovingdon

Avg CO₂ 0.96 lb/mi Energy cons 169 kWh/100 mi Unresolved problems None Maintenance cost \$0 (oil change, inspection) Normal wear \$0 Base price \$44,745 As tested \$46,495 EPA Fuel Econ 17/26/21 mpg Real MPG 22.9 mpg comb

Editor's Note: After Jethro Bovingdon, star of the Top Gear America series coming soon to the MotorTrend app, made off with our G70 for a couple weeks, we conscripted him to write this month's installment. The following are his words.

When I was given the keys to the Genesis G70 3.3T for a recent Top Gear America filming stint, I was extremely excited. We don't get Genesis in the U.K. or Europe (though there are plans to launch by early 2021), and I always think they look great zipping around California. I'm also a big fan of the characterful and hilariously

oversteery Kia Stinger. Surely a smaller, lighter, and more agile Stinger with a higher-quality interior would be something pretty special?

For the most part the G70 lived up to expectations. It's quick, nicely balanced, and genuinely entertaining. Most of all, there's an honesty and intuitive feel to the chassis, which I like. It feels like a sport sedan that wants to be a sport sedan, whereas the German competition seems so keen to be luxurious and tech-heavy that the dynamism is hidden away for only the truly committed to discover. It's funny how manufacturers with such a rich history seem less sure of their identity than a relative upstart like Genesis.

Which isn't to say the G70 is perfect. I like the slightly gruff, gutsy 3.3-liter twin-turbocharged V-6, but the eight-speed automatic is pretty annoying. It's never silken or invisible when you're simply going with the flow in traffic, and when you ask for precise, punchy shifts in Sport mode and start exercising the gearshift paddles, it pretty much ignores your requests.

Other gripes: For me the interior is still some way off something from Audi or BMW, despite so many cues clearly borrowed from the latter. It feels a little lightweight and brittle. On the other hand, perhaps that plays into the sense that this is a sport sedan that harks back a couple of generations. Its sensibilities are rooted in handling, steering accuracy, and body control rather than endless driver aids and connectivity.

I can't help thinking there's a great M3 rival lurking within the G70, if only they'd uncork it. Doesn't the G90 come with a 5.0-liter V-8? Wonder if those clever Genesis people could retune that engine for top-end power rather than lazy torque, cram it into a G70, and really go to town on tying down the chassis.

2020 Honda Civic Si



Service life:
2 mo/1,250 mi*

"We're still getting to know Honda's bargain sport sedan. So far, so good." Scott Evans

Avg CO2 0.65 lb/mi* Energy cons, city/highway 130/94 kWh/100 mi* Unresolved problems None Maintenance cost \$0 Normal wear \$0 Base price \$26,130 As tested \$26,130 EPA City/Hwy/Comb Fuel Econ 26/36/30 mpg

We established in the Civic Si's arrival story that I don't seem to drive a lot of Civics despite my job being to drive all the things, so the Honda Civic Si and I are getting acquainted, and so far, so good.

Some of my colleagues have been down on this generation of Civic Si because it has a 1.5-liter turbo-four tuned up from everyday Civic spec, not a purpose-built, naturally aspirated, high-rpm screamer like past generations of Si. Much as I love a good naturally aspirated engine, this doesn't bother me, mostly because I never formed an emotional attachment to those old Si models. I'm not mad about this engine.

Not that folks' criticisms are nonsense. The engine is laggy, like they say, and the revs hang when you upshift. Neither of those things really bugs me, though. Driving normally, out running errands or whatever, there's enough torque to scoot around in traffic just fine. You don't need to rev it out, and it doesn't feel slow. It feels like a Civic. The light switch action of the turbo happens around 3,000 rpm, and when I'm just puttering around town, I shift at 3,000, so I never notice it. If I want the power of the turbo for a bit of fun driving, it's only a downshift away. The six-speed manual's tightly spaced ratios make it easy as pie to keep the engine in whatever rev range you want, so you can keep the turbo on the boil at all times or leave it switched off. Just drive how you want it to respond.



Regardless of what the throttle's doing, the transmission is a gem. Sure, like all manuals, it's a little stiff in the morning when the gear oil is cold, but it just presents as a little notchy. Once it's warmed up, it's perfect. Only two companies on the planet build manual transmissions this good: Honda and Porsche. The shifter isn't just buttery smooth with delightfully short throws right from the factory—it slips into the next gear (up or down) perfectly every time, as if there's some device in there helping position all the forks and gears and such for you so you never miss a shift.

The sporty seats fitted to the Si are an excellent compromise between support and comfort. They have big bolsters that feel like they'll do a good job when needed, but the padding is plenty soft, so they don't get uncomfortable on longer drives.

Now that we've gotten to know each other, it's time to drive this car like it was meant to be driven. Performance impressions are on deck for the next update.

*COVID-19 interrupted our normal data collection for the Civic Si. Mileage is an estimate, and CO2/energy cons figures are from the EPA.



2020 BMW 2 Series



Service life:
3 mo/5,773 mi • Avg Fuel Econ: 24.9 mpg

"SUV or sedan? We take a spin in a platform-sharing BMW to see how the two BMWs stack up." Stefan Ogbac

Avg CO2 0.78 lb/mi Energy cons 135 kWh/100 mi Unresolved problems None Maintenance cost \$0 Normal wear cost \$0 Base price \$38,495 As tested \$48,495 EPA City/Hwy/Comb Fuel Econ 23/33/27 mpg



We've been living with the BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe for several months now, and the pint-sized sedan has been put through our daily routines and spontaneous adventures. While the 228i Gran Coupe was out on a road trip, I spent time with one of its platform mates, the X1, to answer a frequently asked question today's car shopper may have: What do you gain and give up by switching to an SUV?

For a small sedan with a swoopy roofline, the 228i Gran Coupe is practical for a single person or a couple. The 15.1-cubic-foot trunk easily accommodates a week's worth of groceries and a couple medium-sized pieces of luggage. However, you need to fold the rear seat back for bulky items. An underfloor storage area and cargo floor that doubles as a divider provide extra flexibility. Unfortunately, the narrow trunk opening forces you to slide your belongings in, limiting what you can put back there. Although the X1 gives up 2.5 inches in length to the 2 Series Gran Coupe, the SUV makes up for it in width and height. Both of those factors make the X1 better suited for hauling bulky items, naturally.

Unsurprisingly, the 2 Series Gran Coupe and X1 drive differently despite sharing the UKL2 platform. The 2 Series Gran Coupe holds an advantage with its low-slung stance; there's less body roll, and turn-in feels more immediate. By comparison, the X1 leans more due to its high center of gravity, and it's not as willing to turn into a corner as its sedan sibling. Where the X1 has an advantage is ride quality. Even with the M Sport suspension, the X1 dispatches road imperfections better than the 2 Series Gran Coupe, which crashes over every bump and pothole.

Neither vehicle gives you much excitement. Both are powered by a 2.0-liter turbo-four. Neither feels lacking; there's always power on tap for passing and merging. The eight-speed automatic is also tuned well in the 228i, featuring smooth, snappy shifts and rarely landing in the wrong gear. Sport mode sharpens the throttle response and enables the transmission to hold gears longer, keeping you in the engine's sweet spot. In the X1, the same transmission is a little more relaxed in operation outside of Sport mode, hinting at its fuel economy-focused tuning.

Neither the X1 nor the 2 Series Gran Coupe drives like BMWs of yore, with each catering to a distinct and different audience. The 228i Gran Coupe is for the single person or couple who values a unique vehicle and doesn't need something super spacious. Thanks to its versatility, the X1 is aimed at the small family or active individual who wants a useful compact SUV with a desirable badge. The X1's cushier ride should also make road trips pleasant for more than two people.



Verdict: 2019 Volvo S60



"Comfortable, premium, and handsome—the Volvo S60 had a pleasant yearlong stay in the MotorTrend fleet."

Miguel Cortina

Base price \$41,295 **As tested** \$50,630

Service life: 13 mo/19,953 mi

Avg Econ/CO2 23.9 mpg/0.81 lb/mi

Although it competes in the sport sedan segment, the compact Volvo S60 values comfort and convenience over a spirited and punchy drive. After 12 months with us, the S60 delivered exactly that; its 316-hp T6 engine still feels energetic, but it's tailored to deliver a peaceful experience.

In the beginning, when the S60 was delivered to our Detroit office in 2019, associate road test editor Erick Ayapana bought a one-way ticket to the Motor City and set out on a six-day road trip back to the Golden State. I'd be lying if I said he didn't enjoy the trip. Between that trip and others, the S60 visited Chicago, Denver, Colorado Springs, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and San Francisco, and it was always enjoyable to drive for long periods of time. Although they lack fancy features like massage, the seats are supportive and well cushioned, and the cabin is cozy with its 9.0-inch

SPECS Options Advanced package (\$2,500: driver assistance system, LED headlights, head-up display); multimedia package (\$2,500: digital driver display, premium sound); Premium package (\$2,050: power retractable mirrors, HomeLink, parking sensors); heated rear seats and steering wheel (\$750); metallic paint (\$645); Linear Lime Deco inlay (\$600); Protection package (\$290) **Problem Areas** None

Maintenance cost \$0 (2-oil change, inspection; air filter, in-cabin filter)

Normal wear \$0

3-Year Residual Value* \$29,300 (58%)

Recalls Emergency braking system malfunction

*IntelliChoice data; assumes 42,000 miles at the end of three years



infotainment screen and elegant design. Ayapana was hesitant to hand me the keys when he got back, but as the Volvo's chaperone for the next year, I took good care of it.

I took the S60 on an epic cross-country round trip from Los Angeles to Houston for the holidays. My brother and I drove more than 3,500 miles in a couple of weeks, and the S60 behaved like a champ. Even when we drove through a

snowstorm in New Mexico, the Volvo's all-wheel-drive system delivered traction despite the slippery conditions. And when we headed to the mountain the next day, it maintained control of all four wheels on a thick layer of ice.

Safety First Equipped with the Pilot Assist tech suite, our Volvo could drive itself for a few seconds on the highway without me having to touch the steering wheel. This was handy when I needed to open my water bottle or take a bite of a snack. Pilot Assist uses the cameras and radar units to detect the lane markings and measure the distance to the vehicle in front. The system worked flawlessly, keeping the car centered in its lane and always maintaining a safe distance from the vehicle ahead. The bummer here is that Pilot Assist is not standard; you have to pay \$2,500 for the Advanced package in order to get it.

The Advanced package also adds a head-up display, a 360-degree camera system, full LED adaptive headlights, and LED foglights. I did appreciate the LED headlights' ability to illuminate the curves ahead of me, especially during the long road trips.

Fancy Features The S60's long list of amenities takes a big slice of the credit for keeping occupants comfortable. The multimedia package, which also costs \$2,500, includes a 12.3-inch digital driver display, navigation, and a Harman Kardon premium audio system. I never really used the nav system—with Apple CarPlay, I used Google Maps all the time. However, the digital driver display and Harman Kardon's sound system are two options that enhanced the experience in the cabin. The sound experience is decent, providing crisp and clear melodies, if not quite a match for Volvo's Bowers & Wilkins system. The 12.3-inch



Although many of our long-term cars have seen the odometer stall in 2020, the S60 packed on the miles.



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ITEM 64349

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Includes battery and charger.

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1200 TORQUE FT. LBS.

BOLT BREAKAWAY

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ITEM 6933/69128/69126/69124/6310/69210 shown

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SAVE 86%

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5 ft. 6" x 7 ft. 6" All Purpose/ Weather Resistant Tarp

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ITEM 64240/64783/64784 shown

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ITEM 61524/63054/63057/63150/56668/63094 shown

Compare to Husky 05505 \$22.51

ITEM 61524/63054/63057/63150/56668/63094 shown

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LIMIT 4 - Exp. 1/4/21*

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 61524/63054/63057/63150/56668/63094 shown

Compare to Husky 05505 \$22.51

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ITEM 32267913

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ITEM 61524/63054/63057/63150/56668/63094 shown

Compare to Husky 05505 \$22.51

ITEM 61524/63054/63057/63150/56668/63094 shown

ITEM 32267913

LIMIT 4 - Exp. 1/4/21*

Use Online & In-Store

ITEM 61524/63054/63057/6315

2019 Volvo S60 T6 AWD

DRIVETRAIN LAYOUT	Front-engine, AWD
ENGINE TYPE	Turbo/supercharged I-4, alum block/head
VALVETRAIN	DOHC, 4 valves/cyl
DISPLACEMENT	120.3 cu in/1,971cc
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.3:1
POWER (SAE NET)	316 hp @ 5,700 rpm
TORQUE (SAE NET)	295 lb-ft @ 2,200 rpm
REDLINE	6,600 rpm
WEIGHT TO POWER	12.5 lb/hp
TRANSMISSION	8-speed automatic
AXLE/FINAL DRIVE RATIO	3.08:1/2.07:1
SUSPENSION, FRONT; REAR	Control arms, coil springs, anti-roll bar; multilink, transverse leaf spring, anti-roll bar
STEERING RATIO	16.2:1
TURNS LOCK TO LOCK	2.9
BRAKES, F; R	13.6-in vented disc; 12.6-in vented disc, ABS
WHEELS	8.0 x 18-in cast aluminum
TIRES	235/45R18 98H M+S Continental ProContact TX VOL
DIMENSIONS	
WHEELBASE	113.1 in
TRACK, F/R	63.0/63.0 in
LENGTH X WIDTH X HEIGHT	187.4 x 72.8 x 56.3 in
TURNING CIRCLE	37.1 ft
CURB WEIGHT	3,960 lb
WEIGHT DIST, F/R	56/44%
SEATING CAPACITY	5
HEADROOM, F/R	37.9/37.5 in
LEGROOM, F/R	42.3/35.2 in
SHOULDER ROOM, F/R	56.1/54.5 in
CARGO VOLUME	11.6 cu ft
TEST DATA	
ACCELERATION TO MPH	
0-30	2.2 sec
0-40	3.3
0-50	4.3
0-60	5.8
0-70	7.5
0-80	9.7
0-90	12.9
0-100	16.1
PASSING, 45-65 MPH	2.8
QUARTER MILE	14.5 sec @ 94.9 mph
BRAKING, 60-0 MPH	120 ft
LATERAL ACCELERATION	0.85 g (avg)
MT FIGURE EIGHT	26.4 sec @ 0.67 g (avg)
TOP-GEAR REV @ 60 MPH	1,600 rpm
CONSUMER INFO	
BASE PRICE	\$41,295
PRICE AS TESTED	\$50,630
STABILITY/TRACTION CONTROL	Yes/Yes
AIRBAGS	6: Dual front, front side, f/r curtain
BASIC WARRANTY	4 years/50,000 miles
POWERTRAIN WARRANTY	4 years/50,000 miles
ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE	4 years/Unlimited miles
FUEL CAPACITY	15.9 gal
REAL MPG, CITY/HWY/COMB	18.9/30.7/22.9 mpg
EPA CITY/HWY/COMB ECON	21/32/25 mpg
ENERGY CONS, CITY/HWY	160/105 kWh/100 miles
CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB	0.78 lb/mile
RECOMMENDED FUEL	Unleaded premium



The Volvo S60's seats didn't offer as many luxury touches as some do, but they were supportive and still comfortable on long drives.

display transforms the instrument panel into an all-digital experience that looks premium and modern.

Enter the cabin, and the first thing you'll notice is the standard 9.0-inch infotainment screen. Although you have to take your eyes off the road to use it, I was pleased with how it worked otherwise. Once you get familiar with its user interface, it becomes second nature.

The heated rear seats and heated steering wheel package is available for \$750, but I'd skip those options if you live in the Sun Belt states. The linear lime deco inlay, however, is worth its \$600 price, as it ups the look of the interior with its fine wood.

Performance Although performance may not be at the top of your list when you buy an S60, the T6 engine still delivers some breeze. The 2.0-liter four-cylinder is turbocharged and supercharged, producing 316 hp and 295 lb-ft of torque. Those numbers are respectable, and so are the 5.8 seconds it took to complete our 0–60 test. On the road, the S60 delivers when merging onto the freeway or when passing, with the eight-speed transmission downshifting quickly. However, there were some instances where the power delivery felt too eager. Although the S60 is a front-wheel-drive-based sedan, all-wheel drive comes standard with the T6 engine.

On twisty roads, the S60 did a decent job sticking to the ground and keeping body roll to a minimum. Like the rest of the car, the suspension is tuned to deliver a comfortable ride, which means it will absorb road imperfections with ease while keeping the cabin serene. Steering is also on the soft side, but the feedback is pretty good. Want something sportier? The Dynamic drive mode will turn things up a bit more.



Maintenance As with all new Volvos, scheduled maintenance for the first three years or 36,000 miles is free, so we never paid a single penny at the dealer.

For comparison, we paid \$465.55 for two stops with our 2018 Alfa Romeo Giulia, and our 2017 Audi A4 2.0 Quattro cost \$561.36 for two oil changes and inspections. And although our 2019 Genesis G70 matches the Volvo's complimentary maintenance plan, we had to replace its transmission and transmission control unit early on.

All of the S60's scheduled services were done within a couple of hours. We did have to visit the dealership three additional times because of separate issues, though—twice because of a failure with the evaporative emissions tube and another because the panoramic sunroof wouldn't close. The problem with the evaporative emissions tube was a quick fix, but fixing the panoramic sunroof took an entire day.

How Is It After a Year? Overall, our S60 was a road warrior. It logged 19,953 miles, went cross-country twice, and always delivered a comfortable ride. It's only been gone a short while, but I already miss it.



The supercharged/turbocharged four-cylinder provided respectable power, and the interior was comfortable.



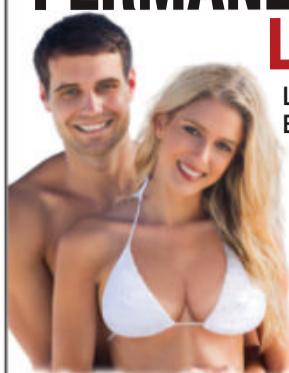
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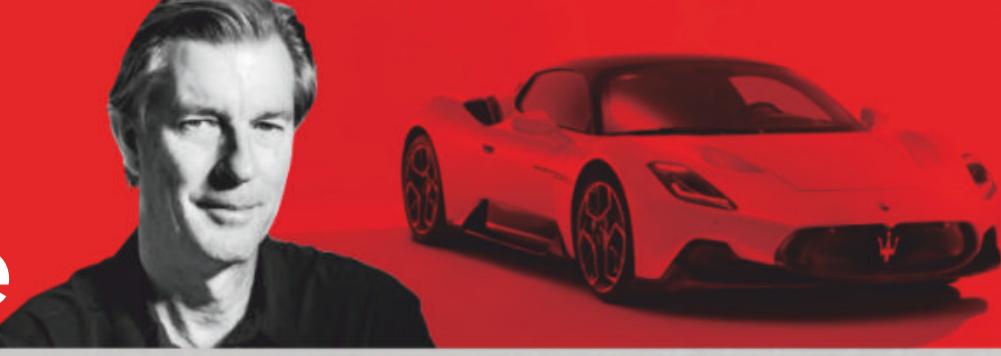


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Angus MacKenzie

The Big Picture



Reinventing Maserati. Again.

The first time I visited the Maserati factory on Viale Ciro Menotti in Modena, just a mile's walk from the city's 12th century cathedral, the plant was building Biturbo coupés. Well, sort of. Although technically interesting—the V-6-powered Biturbo was the first production car with twin turbos and the first with three valves per cylinder—the Biturbo was more an assemblage of parts flying in close formation than a fully bolted-together automobile. The Biturbo was fast. When it ran.

Today, the once-grimy old Maserati plant gleams and glistens. There's fresh white paint on the walls and ceilings, and computer-controlled machinery hums and whirrs on the assembly line where Maserati's new mid-engine supercar, the MC20, is being put together with quiet, calm efficiency. Things are changing at Maserati. Again. Only this time, it genuinely looks like it's changing for the better.

Maserati has had a turbulent, troubled history. Founded in Bologna, Italy, in 1914 by brothers Alfieri, Bindo, Carlo, Ettore, and Ernesto Maserati, the company specialized in building sports and racing cars. A sixth Maserati brother, Mario, designed the brand's iconic trident logo, drawing his inspiration from the 16th century Fountain of Neptune in central Bologna.

Alfieri Maserati died in 1932, and in 1937 the brothers sold the struggling business to industrialist Adolfo Orsi, who moved the company's headquarters to Modena. Under Orsi, Maserati initially flourished. The high point was in 1957, when Juan Manuel Fangio won his fourth F1 world championship at the wheel of a Maserati 250F, widely regarded as one of the finest front-engine grand prix cars ever built. It was also the year Maserati launched its first bespoke road car, the 3500GT.

In 1968 the company was taken over by French automaker Citroën, under whose ownership Maserati would build its first mid-engine supercar, the Bora. But Citroën's grand plans for Maserati were torpedoed by the 1973 oil crisis, and by 1975 the company was part-owned by Argentine industrialist Alejandro de Tomaso, who in the early 1980s persuaded Chrysler to invest in the company. De Tomaso took complete control in 1989 then sold Maserati to Fiat in 1993. Four years later, Fiat sold a 50 percent stake in

Maserati to Ferrari—in which Fiat already had a controlling interest—and in 1999 Ferrari took full ownership. But in 2005, with Sergio Marchionne in the CEO's office at Fiat, Maserati was taken away from Ferrari and partnered with Alfa Romeo.

Amid all the twists and turns, the most important date in Maserati's history was October 20, 2015. That's the day FCA floated Ferrari on the stock market, finally freeing Maserati from playing second fiddle to Italy's most famous sports car brand. The MC20 is a case in point: A 621-hp mid-engine supercar that elbows the Ferrari F8 Tributo in the ribs, it is precisely the sort of car Maserati would never have been allowed to build a few years ago.

It's also the first of a swarm of new or redesigned Maserati models to be unveiled by 2025.

The MC20 will be the halo, but the money maker will be 2021's midsize Grecale SUV, which shares a lot of hardware with the Alfa Romeo Stelvio. Redesigned GranTurismo coupé and GranCabrio convertible models are scheduled for 2022, and in 2023 the Grecale will be joined by a redesigned Levante. Both Maserati SUVs will be available with conventional internal combustion engines as well as mild hybrid and all-electric powertrains.

Indeed, electric powertrains will be available on six Maseratis by 2025.

An electric version of the MC20 supercar, said to sprint from 0 to 60 mph in about 2.7 seconds and to 124 mph in about 8.5 seconds, with a top speed of almost 195 mph, arrives in 2022. Electric versions of the GranTurismo coupe and GranCabrio convertible will launch alongside their internal combustion-powered siblings. The electric Maseratis will all be badged "Folgore"—Italian for lightning.

The MC20 is the Maserati the cognoscenti expect. The Grecale is the Maserati the markets want. The Folgores are the Maseratis the future demands. Now that the Prancing Horse has been let out of the stable, the Trident is finally being allowed to shine. ■

Maserati's Modena factory looks unrecognizable from when we first saw it, and the MC20 is a vastly different beast than the old Biturbo.





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